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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

HOW NED MET THE GENERAL.

"Ship ahoy! what craft is that?" the hail came across the water.

(*Frontispiece. See page 28.*)

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YOUNG DEFENDER SERIES

WITH LAWTON AND ROBERTS

A Boy's Adventures in the Philippines and the Transvaal

BY

ELBRIDGE S. BROOKS

AUTHOR OF "IN BLUE AND WHITE," "THE STORY OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY," "THE TRUE STORY" SERIES, "THE STORY OF OUR WAR WITH SPAIN," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY C. CHASE EMERSON

BOSTON

LOTHROP PUBLISHING COMPANY

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PREFACE

THIS is a story of adventure and battle, based upon the most picturesque and striking incidents in the latest campaigns of two modern heroes of Anglo-Saxon blood—Lawton the American, and Roberts the Englishman.

Into the merits of the causes in defence of which each led his troops to victory, the story does not enter. It is enough to assert that alike the Stars and Stripes in the Philippines, and the Union Jack in South Africa, are advancing the interests of humanity and civilization, and that untrammeled liberty to the barbarian is as disastrous a gift as are unquestioning concessions to a republic which has been a republic only in name.

But as to the dash and daring that marked the campaigning in Luzon, where the gallant Lawton swept all before him, and the unslackening advance over South African plain and hill, where Lord Roberts paralleled his magnificent march to Kandahar, there can be no question from any lover of brave and

FEB 22 1912

brilliant deeds, of heroism, courage, persistency and pluck.

In following the fortunes of Ned Pevear and his friend Maskin, it is to be hoped that young readers will find not only interest but some information; for this story of war in two lands and under three flags, is based upon the most recent and trustworthy reports of campaigns and operations, while the glimpses afforded of Lawton the American, Roberts the Englishman, Kruger the Boer, and Aguinaldo the Filipino are given in the way of snap-shots at men who have been prominently before the world in the closing year of the Nineteenth Century.

As for the rest, if the story may be in any way a help toward that closer union of Anglo-Saxon folk the world over—American, English, Canadian, Australian, or wherever the language of Shakespeare and that of Washington make all such nations kin, —the author's desire simply to tell a story of adventure and action will have found a broader and nobler mission than he even dared hope for.

ELBRIDGE S. BROOKS.

BOSTON, May 25, 1900.

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WITH LAWTON AND ROBERTS

CHAPTER I

A GENTLEMAN STOWAWAY

"A WHAT!" demanded the captain, swinging about on his heel so fiercely as to nearly upset the steward who was preparing tiffin, "A what!"

"A stowaway, sir," the "able seaman" replied; "we found him in the after hold under your cabin just as we were going to break out some of the supplies. A rare young beggar, too, sir," he added with a smile.

"What d'ye mean? I'll 'beggar' him!" cried the angry captain, in a tone that boded no good for the culprit. "I'll find who's to blame, too, sneaking in a stowaway after my orders for a strict lookout. What's the matter with the hobo? What's he say for himself?"

"Beg pardon, sir," said the sailor, with a grin; "blest if I think he is a hobo; he's a young gentle-

man. Asked for soap and water when we lugged him out."

"Soap did he? Thought he'd wash himself through my hands, perhaps," said the captain, attempting a grim joke that nearly doubled up the steward with surprise. "What's he want soap for?"

"That's what he asked for, sir," the sailor replied. "'Ah, my fine feller,' he said to Dago Joe, when he yanked him out. 'Just let me have some soap and water will you, please?' says he; 'and just brush me off with a corn broom if you have one; terrible slack and dirty in my quarters.' Them's jest his words, sir. I never see sich a chap. No hobo about him."

"Gentleman stowaway, eh?" said the captain. "What do you say to that, Major?" he added, turning to the brigade surgeon, who had strolled up from his mess. "Have him up here at once," he commanded, "I'll 'gentleman' him." And thus it was that Ned Pevear, late of Tolman's Military and Commercial Institute, was introduced to Captain Thompson of the transport *Orlando*.

The introduction, though an involuntary one, was not especially desired by either party; for Captain Thompson of the transport *Orlando* prided himself on his careful supervision of every thing within his province in the steamship under his command, and

a stowaway was to him a thing abhorred, the possibility of which he was never willing to admit. While as for Ned Pevear—Major Pevear, if you please, of the school battalion—he had suffered no small shock to his pride in being thus ignominiously dragged, like a culprit, before the unsympathetic captain of a "common carrier," as the boy described the transport.

But dragged he was; and as his demand for soap and water and "a corn broom" had not been granted, Ned Pevear, major of the school battalion and "dandy" of the Institute, was a most dirty, dishevelled and disreputable looking young fellow of sturdy sixteen.

"So, sir!" bawled the captain of the transport, as surrounded by curious and critical officers and "subs" of the 66th Infantry and the 26th Artillery he awaited the coming of the culprit; "you thought you'd try to sneak it on the United States and get a free ride out of the transport service did you? What d'ye mean, boy, by playing the stowaway on this transport? Don't you know that you are a criminal, and that I can clap you in the brig in double irons, trice you up for a round dozen or throw you overboard, just as I see fit?"

"But that would be no way for one gentleman to treat another, sir," the stowaway replied. "Indeed, I think I have a right to complain, sir, that before

introducing me to the commander of this ship you did not even permit me to make myself more presentable. The conveniences in your transport, Captain, are very limited and unsatisfactory and by no means up to date!"

The army officers who had grouped themselves about Captain Thompson to "see the fun" roared with laughter at this unexpected language from a stowaway, but the captain saw nothing funny in it.

"You young rascal," he cried, "how dare you talk like that to me? What's your name and what are you doing here anyhow—stowing yourself away in my ship like a rat in a closet? Come, speak up and talk decent or I'll break you like a roustabout."

"Gentlemen," said Ned, appealing to the army men behind the captain, "will you permit a brother officer to listen to such ruffianly language from the hired captain of a tramp steamer?"

"Brother officer!" "Hear the kid!" "By George, he's a plucky youngster!" came the remarks half drowned in shouts of laughter from the listening officers. But the captain was in a towering rage.

"Hired captain of a tramp, am I?" he cried. "You hold on, I'll show you how much authority I've got here. Bos'n," he called out to that petty officer in the waist, "just strip this chap and trice him up in the shrouds to cool his high blue blood a

little, while I think out what to do for him. I'll teach a dirty young stowaway to face me down on my own deck."

But the brigade surgeon who stood beside the captain touched his arm. "One moment, Captain Thompson, by your favor let me ask that boy a question. He don't seem like a common stowaway. He said something about brother officers; will you permit me to investigate?"

"Go ahead, Major; only don't let the young beggar try any of his gum games on me. I won't stand it. Captain of a tramp—poh!" and the captain of the transport *Orlando* actually snorted in his contemptuous wrath.

"Now see here, my boy," said the brigade surgeon confronting Ned, "Captain Thompson kindly delays his authority until I can question you. What did you mean by appealing to us as brother officers? By what right did you do this? What's your rank and where are you stationed?"

The boy clicked his heels together in true soldierly fashion and touched his forehead in salute.

"I am Major Edward Pevear, sir, ranking officer in the school battalion of Tolman's Military and Commercial Institute at Sonora, detailed on special service in the Philippines."

A roar of laughter ran about the army circle.

"A little tin soldier! A baby brigadier! A play

veteran, ha-ha-ha! Howd'y Major; brother officer howd'y," ran the fusillade of fun.

But the boy stood firm, his hand still at salute.

"I told you to watch out for gum games, Major," growled the captain. "I knew the boy was a fraud."

"That is not true, sir," said Ned, turning upon the captain a withering glance. "I am what I claim to be. Major, will you permit me? Here is my card," and thrusting a dirty hand into the breast pocket of his vest, the boy drew out a bit of pasteboard and handed it to the brigade surgeon. The officers crowded about the major and read the boy's card.

"Gentlemen, the boy is right," said the brigade surgeon with a smile. "He outranks half of us, if school standing counts. Here is his card.

EDWARD PEVEAR, JR.,
Big Horn City,
Montana.

Major First Battalion, T. M. C. I.
Sonora, Cal.

and here, below, is written in pencil 'detailed for service in the Philippines.' How's that, Major? Who detailed you."

The boy smiled confidently upon his questioner.

"Thank you, Major," he said appreciatingly, "I was detailed by a vote of our whole battalion, sir. You wouldn't have me take a dare would you, Major, or forfeit my word of honor when I told the boys I'd go? The word of a gentleman and a soldier, sir, must be kept, whatever happens."

"Ugh! bosh! child's play!" grunted the disgusted captain of the transport. But the army officers, young and old, grouped about the culprit and inquisitors, mingled nods of approval with their smiles and laughter.

A gray haired colonel came out of the throng.

"What name do you say the boy's card gives, Major?" he inquired. "Did you say Pevear?"

"Read it, Colonel," the major replied, handing the card to his questioner.

"Edward Pevear, Jr., eh," said the colonel. "Is Ned Pevear of Big Horn ranches your father, boy?"

"Yes, Colonel," the boy replied, saluting.

"Where was he raised—where did he live before he went west?" the colonel demanded.

"Ellicott City, Maryland, Colonel," replied the boy; "but he went to Philadelphia to live when he was my age."

"And served in the 116th Pennsylvania Volunteers, wounded at Antietam and Spottsylvania and came out brevet major and the best fellow in the whole Eighth corps?"

Young Ned nodded.

"That sounds like him, Colonel," he said. "That's my father sure enough."

The old colonel fairly folded the boy in his arms.

"Gentlemen," he said, "he's Ned Pevear's son; my old bunkie of the 116th. But, Great Scott! lad! What are you doing here, a stowaway on a transport bound for Manila? Couldn't your father's son do better than that?"

"He could, Colonel, but he didn't," Ned replied. "You see it was like this. The fellows of our battalion got to fooling the other day and from fooling they got serious over this Philippine scrap. I suppose I did get to talking a little big over what I'd do, and when they cornered me I couldn't honorably back out. I did not want to volunteer, because I am too young and I knew I could not get my father's consent. But when you've passed your word, Colonel, you've got to keep it, haven't you? My father always says: shoot straight, ride firm, don't lie, fear nothing but dishonor and never break your word. I had passed my word to the battalion, so I just had to go; and here I am."

"But how did you get in here, my blossoming young major-general?" demanded the captain of the transport, his anger somewhat abated, when he saw how the boy stood with Colonel Sinclair.

"Really, Captain, you must not ask me," the boy replied. "I'm afraid discipline was a little relaxed after dark, and it is not so very hard to find a Jackie who can be argued into being accommodating."

"Who is he? Who smuggled you on board?" roared the captain. "Point him out and I'll break every bone in his body, sir."

"That would be hardly gentlemanly, would it Cap'n?" Ned queried. "It would be but a poor return for me to make to the sailor who procured me the pleasure of your acquaintance, and that of my brother officers," he added, saluting the circle of army men.

"Good for you, Major! You're a trump, youngster," came the approving cry; even a half smile crossed the captain's sour face.

But the old colonel still stood with a hand upon the lad's shoulder.

"Questionable business this, Ned," he said slowly. "What will your father say?"

"I reckon he'll say I'm a chip of the old block, Colonel," the boy answered; "and I know he'll think it great good luck for me and worth two days' imprisonment in that dirty hold to fall into the company of his old friend and comrade—I mean you, Colonel."

"Bright boy that, eh, Major," said one of the officers to the brigade surgeon.

"Too bright I'm afraid, Captain," the major replied. "Shows his training though."

"Honor is one thing, my boy," said the old colonel, "and sticking to your word is a duty. But obedience is a higher duty. Did you—did the principal of your school know what you were up to?"

"Who, sir? Old Tommy—I mean Mr. Tolman, sir?" queried Ned with a look of surprise. "Why no, Colonel. We'd hardly be likely to tell him. He'd sit down on the whole business."

"But if you were in his school and under his charge, Ned, was he not your commanding officer? And a soldier's first duty is obedience to his superiors. I think you had better go back to him and report."

The boy looked out over the smooth waters of the Pacific, free from speck or sight of land. Then he turned an inquiring look on the colonel.

"Report to Mr. Tolman, sir?" he said.

"Yes, by the first ship back from Honolulu, Ned," replied the colonel meaningly.

"O, let the boy stay, Colonel," came the cry from the officers. "He's game; let us adopt him, sir. He'll make a good regimental mascot. You can fix things with his father and his schoolmaster. He's plucky; let's have him along."

The colonel shook his head and raised his hand in denial. Then, as he tried to look sternly at the son

of his old friend and comrade, a smile crossed his features.

"I had a boy just your age, Ned, and your name was his middle one—John Pevear Sinclair. But he died." He drew the lad closer to his side. "Well, what do you say for yourself; what would you like most?"

"I think, Colonel," said the boy, struggling hard to keep back the tears at the pressure of the old colonel's hand and the sound of his friendly voice, "I think, sir, I'd like most, just now, some soap and water and a stiff corn broom."

CHAPTER II

THE PLOT IN THE CASCOE

THE soap and water and the stiff corn broom were forthcoming, and Ned Pevear's request became for a time the joke of the mess and the cabin. It was, indeed, his coolness and his evident belief in the virtue of cleanliness, as well as a certain manliness of behavior and openness of disposition that attracted men to this often heedless young adventurer and made "the gentleman stowaway" a general favorite on board the transport and the adopted mascot of the mess.

Even Captain Thompson of the *Orlando* softened toward the lad and forgave his indiscreet remarks, although he never openly admitted this forgiveness and, indeed, used his authority and his undoubted right to punish a stowaway, as a standing menace whenever he wanted to chaff or discipline the boy.

"Detailed for service in the Philippines," as the duty was recorded on the visiting card of the major of the school battalion, appeared to be a boyish "bluff," originally intended as a dare or a double-dare by his schoolfellows, but finally adopted by

" the major "—as the army men on the transport insisted on calling him—as a promise that must be kept and a boyish determination to see the world. How much he suffered during his two days' self-imprisonment in the dirty, stuffy and supply-crammed hold of the *Orlando* he never admitted.

" A soldier must expect to put up with privations, Major," he said to the brigade surgeon. " I've got into the scrape myself, so I am not going to whimper."

This was good soldierly talk and this it was that so fixed him in the liking and good fellowship of the officers' mess that by the time Honolulu was reached (where for three days the *Orlando* remained to coal) even good Colonel Sinclair had relented, and, instead of shipping Ned home to his father and his school, sent back in his place letters in praise of the lad and begging for the opportunity of showing so " manly a young fellow " a bit of life.

The green hills of Hawaii were left behind and in twenty days the embattled slopes of Corregidor and the great bay beyond its narrow, island-covered mouth lay before him, and Ned Pevear, stowaway and mascot, was anchored before the captured capital of the Philippines.

The voyage on the transport had been long and sometimes tedious, but not uninteresting. The fifteen hundred fighting men and forty-five officers

under the command of Colonel Sinclair were somewhat crowded as to quarters; the mess-deck was scarcely large enough to seat the men at meals, but the spar deck made an available though not always steady annex, and many a hearty laugh at the antics of the deck, had "Major Mascot," as the "boys" dubbed Ned Pevear; for when he messed with the troopers, as he often did, his stew and sometimes he himself would go flying down the companionway when the *Orlando* lurched unexpectedly or the clumsy shoe of "somebody's bunkie" shot out with an unlooked-for kick against his unsteady form to the utter demoralization of the whole "banquet board."

But Ned was no grumbler, and in his usual happy-go-lucky way, he always saw the joke rather than the inconvenience of overcrowding and imperfect sea-legs and was as ready to laugh over his own as others' misadventures and join in the chaff and laugh as the overturned "rookie" righted himself to the vociferous chorus—the "As you were" of his companions.

With all the admitted, if unrecorded, privileges of a mascot, Ned knew the whole ship from keelson to mast-head pennant. The Red Cross nurses of the hospital, the chief steward of the "Butcher shop," the berth deck at inspection-hour, the mess table of the officers, the captain in his cabin, the quarter-

master on his watch and the colonel in his quarters, all were privileged persons and places so far as "Major Mascot" was concerned, and Ned was just a bit sorry, though more than a bit excited when the anchors were run out in Manila harbor and he had to say good-by to the *Orlando* and many of his fifteen hundred friends.

But when the quarantine delay was over and the troops were sent to the Malate barracks, Ned went with the colonel to report at headquarters in Manila city and found much to interest and entertain him in this first view of the strange conditions of an oriental island capital over which, in possession, floated the beautiful flag he had now sworn to follow and defend.

Spanish had been one of Ned Pevear's chief studies in Tolman Academy. He was an apt scholar, and, with the opportunities of the Pacific slope, he had become an adept in the conversational part of that mellow southern tongue. He found now that it stood him in good stead, for, when Colonel Sinclair saw that he was to be depended upon for obedience and interpretation, Ned was appointed as a volunteer aid to the colonel, and accompanied him on his investigations in Manila or was employed on errands in which his knowledge of Spanish was of especial service.

It was on such an errand as this that Ned, "de-

tailed for special service in the Philippines,"—for his self-imposed duty was now actually made fact—was despatched one day by Colonel Sinclair.

The colonel's command had been ordered to join General Lawton's flying column which was soon to be sent into the field, and Ned had been despatched to the advanced post at San Pedro Macati, where the scouts detailed for service with the expedition were in camp.

At one of the landing places on the river front of Manila, Ned had expected to find the canoe and coolie who were to carry him up the river. But neither were there, and while Ned was pacing the pier in American impatience, undecided whether to wait or summon another conveyance, a white clad Filipino, with all the friendly courtesy of an "Amigo," inquired as to the boy's trouble.

Ned's Spanish was equal to all such conversational demands and he explained his dilemma.

"But why trouble oneself, O friend?" said the Filipino. "See; in ten-eleven minutes, one of Don Felipe's cascoes stops here one minute on its way straight to San Pedro. My American friend may go in that instantly without waiting for his rascal coolie. I am friend to the governor," and he displayed his pass, "and gladly help his young officer on the colonel's service."

Ned thanked him and, as despatch was necessary,

concluded to avail himself of the Filipino's offer without hunting up his tardy coolie.

But as he prepared to wait on the pier the Filipino said: "Time is precious to the American, my friend, so why waste it in waiting. See, until the cascoe of Don Felipe arrives, would not my young friend, the colonel's aid, care to see a cock-fight? Ah! fine birds, noble birds, young sir, well matched and for a splendid main. Has my young friend ever seen the cocks fight? No! See, I will watch for the cascoe; step you within and see the sport."

Now Ned was new to Manila and had never seen the national sport of the Filipinos; he knew it was frowned upon by the American authorities; but he was an inquisitive lad, curious to see all the customs of the country; and, with but brief consideration, he decided to step inside the nipa "shack," or native hut, and watch the cock-fight just a moment.

The hut was crowded with natives, among whom were sprinkled a half dozen American soldiers, off duty, and ready to wager their silver on the sport. The cocks were handsome birds, of that beautiful muscular and agile breed for which the Philippines are famous, and though the sport was a cruel one, it was also fascinating to this American boy, keen admirer of any exciting game, especially when it had the tinge of interest that prohibited sport always possesses.

The birds were well matched and the battle was so excitingly a battle royal that Ned was most unconscious of the flight of time. Suddenly he was brought to his senses by an intruding recollection of his mission and even while the main was at its height he tore himself ruthlessly away from the pit and without looking for his Filipino friend who was to tell him when the cascoe arrived he rushed down to the river.

Two or three cascoes lay at the pier, and one was just drawing away, headed up-stream.

"Is that Don Felipe's cascoe?" he demanded breathlessly of a lounging coolie.

The man nodded.

"*Si, senor,*" he replied.

"Bound for San Pedro?"

"*Si, senor.*"

Without an instant's hesitation Ned took the long leap and landed on the stern of the long basket-covered boat which is the chief passenger craft of the Filipino rivers. Panting from his long run and jump, the boy crawled into the shade of the hood-like bamboo stern-house and threw himself upon a pile of hempen rugs to get his "second wind" before going forward to interview the poleman of this strange oriental craft.

But as his breath returned to him his ears caught the sound of low voices just outside the bamboo cur-

tains of his retreat. The words were Spanish, but, after he "got the hang" of the talk, Ned's wits returned to him and he became the calm, cool lad he always was in an emergency.

For he had caught the menace of the fierce, low-spoken words "death to the Americans," and he strained his ears to listen.

"It must not fail this time," this was what he heard; "the last beautiful plot failed because of that traitor's disclosure of the secret conference. Ah! but he paid for it! But we are better prepared now. Only those sworn to secrecy under the banner of the Katipunan and pledged to its sacred oath of brotherhood are at the head of the affair, and there can be no escape for the tyrants now. Three American renegados have joined the brotherhood and will be on duty at the gate to-morrow night. They will admit the president, Don Emilio, and his aids, and once within the walls, the rising will be simultaneous, while ten thousand of our braves, led by the general from Santa Mesa, will rush the American lines and join Aguinaldo at the rendezvous at Santa Cruz. The city will at once be fired at a dozen selected points and then—where will the Americans be? At our mercy, my brother! The sharpshooters of Tondo and Santa Ana have their posts assigned them and, with a force of twenty to one, we will give no quarter to the false Americans,

and the Filipino republic will be gloriously established in the blood of the American invaders. But secrecy, secrecy my brother is first of all. When we are landed at Don Tomas's rice wharf, do you, Pablo, speed across to San del Monte; there the messengers from Aguinaldo await you. Tell them to say to the president that all is arranged for the affair, and that when he leaves his army in ambush he is to go straight to the gate beyond the Luneta where the American renegados will admit him and his aids in silence. Let him keep his tryst and we will keep ours. The watchword will be 'Rizal and liberty.'"

Half hidden in his pile of rugs, his ear fairly glued to the bamboo hood, Ned Pevear heard all the details of this second plot of surprise and massacre. What could he do? He must act at once. And yet his first duty lay with the scouts at San Pedro. And the cascoe that he had so rashly boarded was evidently not Don Felipe's at all, but was bound for the landing on the other side of the Pasig.

He drew himself noiselessly from his covert and toward the overhanging stern of the cascoe, deliberating whether or not it were safe to drop overboard and swim ashore.

But the cascoe, he found, was well in midstream, and he felt that attempted escape that way would be

foolhardy. He searched the stream about for passing canoe or cascoe; but none were near.

Perhaps the bamboo curtains rolled tightly together might serve as an aid in swimming a distance. Cautiously he drew back within the shadow of the deck house and sought to unfasten the light bamboo screen. But, even as he did so, his hand fell upon the uncanny flesh of a hairless, tufted Filipino dog; the cur awoke with a start and a snarl; then he broke into a vigorous yelp of protest as the boy's hand sought to choke or smother his bark.

But it was too late. Through the opening in front two brown faces were thrust within the basket house; two lithe brown forms followed the faces and fairly flung themselves upon the boy who was attempting to retreat once more under the cover of the hempen rugs.

"A spy! a spy! an American spy!" rose the alarm and, as other brown faces and lithe forms crowded to the hut, Ned Pevear saw that struggling was useless and, overpowered and quiet, he lay an unresisting prisoner in the hands of the plotting Filipinos.

CHAPTER III

THE WORTH OF A WATER BUFFALO

QUICK and fast in mingling Spanish and Tagalog came the demands and inquiries from his captors; but Ned lay quiet and answered them never a word. Just then it was wisest not to understand Spanish.

He understood well, however, all that they said and the punishments with which they threatened him—some of them brutal and barbarous enough to show that the savage lived not far beneath that veneer of partial civilization. But still he never winked or moved lest by such an indication he should betray the fact that he did comprehend their threats and understand their speech.

At last, even the boy's brown captors appeared to appreciate the fact that their talk was unintelligible to the young American.

"*Habla Espagnol?*" demanded one of them impatiently.

"I don't know, Johnnie," replied Ned, looking boldly into the dark eyes of the Filipino. "Is that

where you are bound? I want to go to San Pedro Macati. Isn't this Don Felipe's cascoe?"

"*Si, si; cascoe,* San Pedro," replied the Filipino catching at the native words. And another, who made some pretence to knowledge of English tried on the boy the only word he knew.

"Spikka Espagnol?" he demanded.

"I don't know. Where is it?" replied Ned, seemingly as stupid as ever. "Say, boys, you had better let me get off at San Pedro or there'll be trouble. I'll tell General Otis."

"Oteez, ah!" exclaimed the chief captor. Then he looked up at his companions crowded about the prostrate boy. "It is from the General Otis, he comes, my brothers," he said in Spanish. "It is to spy upon us he is here. See, let us bind him securely and send him on as prisoner to Don Emilio. He will see to it that the spy of the General Otis never turns informer. Rope, Pablo! let us bind the assassin and send him on to the president at San Isidro. Even if he knows not what we say, his presence here is dangerous and he must be put out of our path. The president will see to that."

Ned realized his danger; he knew that he must make a desperate struggle for liberty; his watchful eyes "sized up" his foemen; they were little:—"boys," he always insisted on calling these five-foot Filipinos; he was strong and athletic; it must

not be said that he, Ned Pevear, major of the school battalion, center rush on the foot ball team and champion in the school gym was overpowered by this pigmy Filipino eleven. He suddenly recalled the day when, in the match game with the Napa Institute boys, he had flung himself clear of the whole mass of tacklers; here was Pablo with the ropes; now was his time—now!

With a mighty strain and struggle of his well trained and athletic young sinews Ned Pevear suddenly lifted himself clear of that brown band of captors; to right, to left, upon and across each other they fell, flung backward by his muscular arms; then, firm on his feet, he turned before they could recover, and with a swift sweep of his clutching hands he tore the light bamboo covering aside, flung it in the faces of his bewildered but recovering captors and, poising scarcely an instant on the low stern of the cascoe, he leaped into the river.

Ned was perfectly at home in the water when he was dressed—or undressed, for it; but fully dressed as he was, even though lightly clothed, from boots to helmet hat, he was not really in first class swimming trim. His hat went floating down the stream a target for the enraged Filipinos in the cascoe, but Ned was not in the hat. Handicapped though he was by his clothes he still struggled manfully beneath the waters of the Pasig, and recalling how

once on a dare he had, "with his boots on," made fifty yards under water he called all his energies into play and swam under water as long as breath and soaked khaki would permit.

The Filipinos from whose clutches he had escaped evidently thought that retribution had swiftly followed him.

"He is drowned," they said, as they ceased firing at the floating helmet, and saw no sign of the boy. "So perish all spies; death to all false Americans; our plans are safe."

But even as they thus assured themselves of the fate of their late captive, Ned Pevear, still swimming his long under water stent, was beginning to weaken. The weight of his clothes and the effort of his escape alike affected his breath and strength, and he knew he must speedily come to the surface—perhaps to his death. He expended his energy in a few more desperately long strokes, and then rose to the surface. Even as he did so his hand encountered something hard and leathery—something alive.

"Not a 'gator, I hope," thought the boy, fearful lest he had escaped the danger of men only to fall into the jaws of a crocodile. But the skin was not scaly, it was hard and hairless, and startled by his touch the swimming animal swerved from him. Ned made another desperate clutch—even as the drowning man clutches at the straw—and fastened

himself upon a clumsy leg that kicked and paddled for freedom and swimming room. Swiftly the boy came above the surface and clearing the water from his eyes Ned saw that his salvation was accomplished by an ill-looking great horned carabao or water buffalo, whose hind leg he had seized beneath the waters of the Pasig.

He glanced around for his late captors; the cascoe had evidently given him up for lost and was already mingled with other cascoes far up the stream. Some distance below him, steaming up the river, puffed one of the little launches which ply about Manila on official errands, while right ahead were the marshy banks of the Pasig in whose muddy waters buffaloes love to disport.

Evidently this one had taken a swim quite beyond his depth, for there was yet quite a goodly stretch of river before the mud could be reached, and Ned was not sure he wanted to land in that unfamiliar and perhaps unfriendly mud. His best reliance, he believed, was in the launch puffing nearer to him; and that he decided to try to reach.

But the water buffalo had plans also. He certainly did object to the persistent creature hanging to his leg; he kicked and struggled to free himself but Ned held bravely on. At last, with a happy thought the boy lifted himself from the water and

by a good stiff vaulting spring fairly landed himself astride the back of the water buffalo.

The docile creature was evidently greatly relieved.

"Ah! it is a man and not a crocodile," the water buffalo assured itself, and as Ned, with a movement he had observed in the natives, seized the enormous horns of the buffalo and actually steered the beast toward the puffing launch, the intelligent, patient and well trained carabao followed the guidance of the boy's hand and swam down stream toward the approaching launch.

Over the stern of the boat streamed the stars and stripes, so Ned felt himself in good company once more. The helmsman saw the strange water courser and shifted his wheel to bear down upon the rider who was swinging his hand in appeal; the next instant bronzed and soldierly faces lined the side of the launch and mingled laughter and chaff hailed the boy on the buffalo.

"Ship ahoy! What craft is that?" the hail came across the water; whereupon, swift to appreciate the fun of the thing, Ned made instant reply:

"The 'Water Witch' from Buffalo!" he returned, whereupon the launch broke into a roar.

"Heave to or we'll put a shot across your bows," cried the officer who was leading the fun; and Ned,

nothing loth to enter into the joke now that he felt really safe, gave back fun for fun.

"I think my craft will heave me if I give him a chance, sir," he replied. "Come alongside and take me aboard, won't you?"

But the water buffalo did not like the steam launch and had no desire to be run down or rammed into a wreck; its wild ways again asserted themselves as the savage nature of this domesticated beast is so apt to do when terrified, and, tossing its head in the air, it fairly tore its great horns loose from Ned's uncertain hand and turned for the shore so suddenly and with so swift a swerve that the boy lost his hold and was once more floundering in the waters of the Pasig.

But the launch was near at hand by this time and in a moment Ned was being lifted over the rail by friendly hands and into the launch, where, dripping and unsteady on his feet though he was, his hand went to his forehead in quick salute.

"Come aboard, sir," he reported to the officer who received him.

"So I see," replied the laughing officer regarding the dripping boy with curiosity; "Where do you hail from, youngster, cruising around here in the Pasig on a water buffalo?"

"I am a volunteer aid to Colonel Sinclair, sir,"

Ned replied. "I have just escaped from a lot of Filipino assassins—and I've lots to tell."

"Colonel Sinclair's aid, eh? What do you think of that, General?" said the officer, turning towards a big man in white flannel who was regarding the boy intently. "The lad says he's just escaped from the Filipinos. Tell General Lawton about it, boy."

Ned turned about and saluted the tall officer in white. So this was General Lawton, was it? Ned had never seen him before, though he had heard much of the dauntless fighter—hero of the Apache wars and the charge up San Juan hill.

What he saw was a man over six feet in height, his hair and mustache whitened and his skin browned and seared by years of campaigning in sun and rain and wind; a grim featured but kindly eyed man, dressed in white and capped by a big white Suez helmet hat. Just now, his glance rested on the dripping lad before him with a half-fatherly, half-humorous expression, as he answered his subordinate's query with a brusque "hm" and added, "Well, Starr, I should think the youngster had better dry off before he tells his wonderful yarn. Can't be too careful of boys in this climate. He doesn't look old enough to be out of school. Been sick yet, young one?"

"No, General," the boy replied with a salute. "I'm all right. I reckon I'm pretty tough."

The general smiled.

"I hope you are; only you have to be careful here. You say you're Colonel Sinclair's aid? Well, drive ahead with your story."

Ned was about to begin. Then he hesitated.

"It's private, General," he said. "Can't I tell it to you alone, somewhere? There may be some Gugus about."

The general bent his heavy brows at this indication of the boy's caution; then he nodded approvingly.

"Major Starr and I will hear your report, my lad," he said. "Even an 'amigo Gugu,' as you boys call the Filipino, is apt to have open ears and a loose tongue; and our pilot may be that."

He bade Ned follow the major and himself to the cushioned stern of the launch, and there the boy told his story.

The general listened without interruption.

"An aid should be an aid and not a hindrance, my lad," he said. "Colonel Sinclair's orders were for you to go to San Pedro in the coolie's canoe, and you blundered into that cascoe after you'd nearly lost your wits at a cock-fight. You'll have to brace up, young man, and obey orders if you expect to be a success. I'm going up to look after

those scouts, too. You get back to town and tell Colonel Sinclair that you reported to me, and that my chief of staff will see Young about the colonel's detail of scouts. Now as for that plot. If you hadn't blundered on that miserable dog we'd have the whole thing foul, and Don Emilio would be in our hands perhaps. Just you take a lesson from Young's scouts, lad, whom I am going to detail for service with Colonel Sinclair. They'll tell you that a woodsman knows before he feels. They'd never clap their hands on a sleeping cur in the rugs. You ought to hunt Apaches a little while, then you'd get schooled to cautiousness. But that's all right. You were plucky, and you can tell Colonel Sinclair so with my compliments."

Ned smiled.

"He won't think I am bragging, will he, General?" he asked.

"He won't if I tell you to say so," said Lawton. "Obedience, you know, is your duty. You say what I tell you to."

And Ned decided that he would.

"I am afraid your discovery upset their plans," the general proceeded; "even though you did play 'possum as to your knowing Spanish. By the way, that is a good thing. My compliments to Colonel Sinclair and say I may need to draw on him for an extra interpreter sometime. Tell him, too, that if

anything delays me beyond to-morrow to detail a guard and a couple of secret service men to watch out for the renegades at the old gate—you don't know which one it is, do you?"

"The gate beyond the Luneta, he said, General," Ned replied.

"Well, we'll have spies and a guard at every walled gate so as to be sure," the general decided. "Beg Colonel Sinclair arrange with the folks at headquarters for this; it scarcely comes within my province. But we mustn't let the matter go unattended to. If we could bag Aguinaldo and choke off a conspiracy—why lad, they'd make you president when they heard of it at home!"

Ned felt duly elated at the general's commendation, and when, soon after, a coolie and a canoe were hailed and he was floating back to Manila, he lay on his back, building air-castles.

But air-castles are most unsubstantial things, as rickety as a Filipino shack, and so the boy soon discovered. For when he had reported to Colonel Sinclair and had been duly reprimanded and praised by that loving disciplinarian, and when the guard and secret service men had been detailed to watch the walled gates for traitor Americans and the wily Aguinaldo—behold! they were not at all in evidence; the officials at headquarters had their labor for their pains and opinion was divided as to Ned Pevear's

report. Some claimed that the *insurrectos* had been frightened off from their attempt by the boy's presence in the cascoe, while others decided that the boy had just been fooled and that the "Gugus," as the soldiers nicknamed the insurgent Filipinos, were giving him a "jolly," as the language of the mess put it.

So "Major Mascot" realized the sad truth of the proverb about pride going before a fall; and like another Achilles was inclined for a brief season "to sulk in his tent." But Colonel Sinclair believed in him, he knew, and even the brigade surgeon complimented while chaffing him. So the world did not seem entirely hollow, and when, next day, orders came from General Lawton for Sinclair's picked troopers to join his command at once for the Northern expedition, Ned Pevear's confidence and spirits came back as Colonel Sinclair read him a portion of Major Starr's communication.

"The general begs from Colonel Sinclair the loan of his young volunteer, whose alertness in action and knowledge of the Spanish language so effectually blocked the latest native plot. The general would like to avail himself of the lad's services, if Colonel Sinclair will permit."

"Virtue is its own reward, Ned," said the colonel laughingly. "What do you care if the boys do laugh at your fairy stories, so long as the general takes stock in you? Of course I'll permit, though I'm

afraid you'll run into trouble. Report to the general at once."

And as Ned rode joyfully forward on his Filipino pony to join the bivouac of Lawton's command at La Loma church, he concluded that "to be in with the general" was better than "to be in with the boys," and that a place with Lawton on the firing line was well worth a plunge in the Pasig, even if the boys did make fun of his story of how he used the hind leg of a water buffalo for a life preserver.

CHAPTER IV

HOW NED CAPTURED THE BATTERY

In light marching order, with ten days' field rations drawn by water buffaloes, and with a hundred rounds of ammunition to each man, Lawton's command marched away from La Loma church to invade the rebellious provinces above Manila and scatter or capture the insurgent army of the north.

Ned was in high spirits. He was to get to the front; he was to see service on the firing line; he was a volunteer aid specially detailed as interpreter and Colonel Sinclair, though a little dubious, tried to believe that, attached thus to General Lawton's person, the lad would practically be safe from danger.

But one of the general's special aids scouted the idea.

"See here, young fellow," he said to Ned, as the lad expressed his desire to be "'way at the front,"—"see here, young fellow, if you don't want to die you'd better keep in the rear of the general. He's a great chap to lead and not to follow. I tell you, I get worn out trying to keep up with him. He's

always for getting a mile or more ahead of his advance guard, right out in the enemy's territory. Says he wants to see the country."

"Then I've got to keep up with him, if I'm his interpreter," Ned declared. "Those are my orders."

"All right, all right, my son," said the aid. "Go if you want to, only you'll get enough of it soon. I tell you I'm getting tired of always being a cavalry screen for the general's advance guard. He's going to get hit too, some time. That white helmet of his is a shining mark a mile away; and he *is* such a big chap on his big horse. If you want to save your bacon just you keep behind his horse. But, Great Scott! He is a fighter. You'll find that out soon enough."

Ned was indeed to learn the truth of the aid's half-grumbling praise of his general. Lawton was out to flank and surround Aguinaldo's army and to capture, if possible, that wandering "president" of the Filipino republic; and Ned discovered that no work was too severe, no fighting too hot, no march too rapid, to baffle the man whom the Apaches used to call "man-who-gets-up-in-the-night-to-fight," and whom the Filipinos dubbed "the sleepless one."

There was little chance to sleep for general or private, for American or Filipino, as that vigorous game of remorseless "tag" swept on from Manila

to the north. It was "follow your leader"—and that leader, Lawton, the gray-haired giant of the piercing eye and the tireless tactics. From Manila to San Isidro, fifty miles and more to the north, the double invasion swept unresistingly on. With Lawton leading the main command and MacArthur conducting the supporting column far to the left the volunteers and regulars pressed on, over heavy paddy fields of rice and soggy sugar lands; through stiff lines of cane brake and along roads checkered with mud-holes and pitfalls; through villages nestled in the tropical luxuriance of palms, bananas and strange oriental plants; across rivers spanned by broken bridges and into trenches briefly held and swiftly deserted by the persistent little brown men in blue cotton uniforms who fought a campaign of worry and quit; with water buffaloes breaking down and men dropping with sunstroke and fever; with frequent interruptions for Filipino conferences and commissions or by flags of truce disregarded as soon as shown; still ever forward, skirting the great swamp of Candaba which separated the advancing columns; fighting a vanishing enemy seldom seen but persistently heard from; in the swish and spat of the vicious little Mauser bullets cutting through the bamboo brake; with the galloping batteries drawn by steaming horses dashing forward to the ever shifting firing line, and the high-piled supply wagons

pushed by men in khaki or flannel, in place of the broken-down water buffaloes; on and still on, until, at last, San Isidro was reached and Aguinaldo and his elusive army, not staying to be captured, had broken up or were scattered in the mountain fastnesses beyond Bongabong.

It was Ned Pevear's first taste of war. That first taste came speedily; for, before Novaliches was reached, the vanguard of Dakota men began the running fight that held steadily on from the rocky ford of the Tuliacan to the plaza of San Isidro.

As interpreter of the captured or commissioned Filipinos, as aid and messenger and volunteer scout, Ned was scarcely ever at rest. He was with Scott's battery during the fight at San Rafael; he helped ring the cathedral bells by which the scouts announced to the laboring columns the capture of town and village; he saw the traitorous attack on the flag of truce and the stiff fight with the Tagalog rear-guard on the San Miguel road; he rode beside the "big gun of the Americans," that terror of the fleeing villagers, as it pushed past the nipa huts that lay beneath the betel palm and behind the hibiscus hedges, and he fairly rushed his wiry Tagalog pony at the heels of the general's big black horse as Lawton, with a resistless dash, pushed forward the fight that captured the banana-shaded gardens of Maasin.

It was all an experience that Ned never forgot;

he felt the exaltation of battle and the thrill of the rush and charge, which, despite the horror and the wickedness of war, still seem a supreme moment to every man who bears his share in the fierce clash of arms.

"Gangway for General Lawton!" he sang out, as the big leader in white, coming upon the rear of the skirmish line in the cane brake, galloped through the tramping column on the dusty San Miguel road, and with orderlies and staff dashed ahead to the front.

The general's eagle eye caught a flutter of white on the road ahead, far in advance of his skirmish line, before the trenches of Baliuag.

"Here! Orderly! O, you—Pevear! ride over to Scott's battery; tell him to cease firing until we answer the flag. They may be playing it on us, but we must look out for the women and children. That's right. Now, Captain Case, shake out a white flag and see what they want. What's that, Ned? You want to go with the cap'n? All right; but be careful; you can go as an orderly," and Captain Case of the Oregons with the two orderlies and the flag bearer advanced toward the enemy.

"Drop, if they fire on us, boys," said the captain as they rode forward. "You never know what these Gugus will do. Watch out for trouble."

Nearer and nearer they rode. The Filipino truce

flag was not five hundred yards ahead. Then the captain halted.

"Shake out your flag, orderly," he commanded.

But even as the orderly did so, a Filipino officer on a black horse broke through the screen of brush; the white flag disappeared at once; the Filipino's hand waved in command and, out from the underbrush came a volley of Mauser bullets.

"The traitorous curs!" cried the captain. "They're trying to kill us. About men! ride for your lives; slide off, if they fire again. The general will fix 'em."

The general did "fix 'em."

"Rush out your skirmish line! Save them! Quick, rush!" shouted the general. "By George! you're too late. They've done for 'em. Open up on those trenches, Scott, as soon as our men are out of range."

But they were not done for. Following the captain's orders the four riders slid to the ground between the rice paddies; then, rising suddenly, they broke into a run for the American lines, dragging their horses after them by the bridles. Crash, swish! came another volley, and again the flag bearers dropped; but again they were up and away; another volley and the same Indian tactics; then the skirmish line with a yell gathered them in; the Filipinos ran for their lives from the treacherous brush

and Captain Case, with a salute, reported to the general.

"I have the honor to report, sir," he says, saluting, and as Ned thinks, giving quite unnecessary information, "that the flag of truce was fired upon."

"I saw it. Any one hurt? You all right, Ned? We'll pay off those scalawags. Open on 'em, Scott."

The battery dashed after the fleeing brown men; then across the rice fields came the clang of bells, telling that the scouts were in the town, and Lawton galloped off to where the avenging skirmish line was sweeping soldiers and non-combatants into the threatened town.

"Those scouts will be trapped, and so will the advance, too, if they don't watch out," cried Lawton; "ride up to that skirmish line, Ned. Tell 'em to hang back until we can reinforce them or they'll all be bagged, too, by the Filipinos in the town. I'll rush up Summers and his infantry to their aid."

Ned dashed forward to hold back the endangered advance. The bells of Baliuag were still clanging in unmusical jubilation and Ned, anxious about the scouts, communicated his orders and then dashed through the skirmish line so as to be in first at the capture.

Through the line and close up to the fleeing mass of Filipino soldiers and villagers he galloped until, straight ahead, he recognized a black horse; he was

sure he knew it; it was the one ridden by the treacherous insurgent officer who had fired on the flag of truce. He was rallying his men for a stand around a battery of three guns whose servers seemed to have deserted it in panic.

Ned had been wrought up to the frenzy of fight; his anger over the treacherous attack on the flag of truce made him almost reckless.

He "let out" the startling American yell that might be relied upon to stampede a whole Tagalog battalion and, heedless in his excitement, rode straight at the defenders of the battery.

The rider of the black horse waved his sword frantically. "Shoot! shoot!" he commanded; then his arms went up with a shout of horror.

"*Santa Maria! Santa Maria!* it's the drowned American boy!" he cried. In a spasm of superstitious fear he wheeled his horse about and fairly led the rout into the town, while Ned, understanding that he had again turned the tables on the chief conspirator of the cascoe plot, dropped from his saddle and swung one of the guns toward the city, determined to rake the fleeing foeman with his captured battery in case they rallied to reclaim it.

Just then the bells of the cathedral rang out more noisily, as the six scouts in the plaza hailed their relief, for, up the river bank and into the plaza, swung

THE FILIPINO BATTERY.

"Santa Maria! It's the drowned American boy!" cried the insurgent officer.

THE N. [illegible]
PUBLIC LIBRARY

Colonel Summers and his infantry men, and Baliuag was won.

But, beside his captured battery, rejoicing in his victory, stood Ned Pevear, its single captor.

"Quite a stiff little chase," the general was saying as he rode up with a part of his staff. "I'm glad Summers got into town in time. Hullo, Ned, what have you been doing? I didn't tell you to charge the whole Filipino army. I told you to halt the skirmish line, and the next minute I saw you dash through the line and stave ahead like mad. What did you do that for?"

Ned stood beside his "fruits of victory" and, saluting, followed Captain Case's form of report.

"Sir," he said; "I have to report that I captured this battery from the enemy."

"And routed them I suppose," said Lawton, with a very perceptible smile.

For reply, Ned pointed significantly toward the captured town of Baliuag.

"General," he said, "the officer commanding this battery was the fellow that fired on our flag; he was the Gugu plotter from whom I escaped on the cascoe."

"And he ran away from a ghost, eh?" said the general, appreciating the situation. "Most valiant ghost, 'you done noble,' as the fellow says in the

play. But I didn't suppose the insurgents had a battery here. It's a good haul, Ned. I'd make you captain of the battery if I could. You're a plucky chap. Did it single-handed, eh—you and your ghost?"

Ned felt highly elated over the general's good opinion.

"Shall I turn 'em over to Captain Scott, General?" he said.

Lawton looked at the boy and then at the captured guns. A queer look came into his eyes. "Inspect them, Captain," he said to one of his staff.

The captain dismounted and rapped the barrels of Ned's "treasure trove" with knuckles and riding whip. Then his smile expanded into a broad grin as he looked up.

"Quakers, General," he reported; whereupon staff and skirmish line broke into a laugh.

But the general, as gentle as he was grim, laid a hand on the boy's shoulder.

"It's not always what you get as the way you get it that counts, Ned," he said. "Your act was a daring and a plucky one and you will make a gallant soldier—in time and with a bit more caution," he added. "A dash like yours, single handed, upon an enemy's battery, was just as brave as if you had captured a dozen Maxims instead of three Quakers."

"Quakers?" repeated puzzled Ned, in a sort of half query.

"Yes, Quakers, my boy," replied the general; "dummy guns, you know, planted here as if to defend the line of entrenchment from attack and to fool better posted chaps—none could be braver though, Ned—than you. We old soldiers have known them ever since the Johnnies—the Confederates, I mean—mounted 'em on the earthworks at Centreville, and they fooled us more than once."

Then the scouts who had captured Baliuag—there were only six of them in all beside Major Starr of the general's staff—rode up to report. The major told how Summers's infantrymen were still chasing the fugitive Filipino fighters out from the town and into the paddy fields toward the next line of intrenchments at Maasin; and the general rode into Baliuag, deserted save for the waving white flags stuck in the nipa huts of the "amigos" in token of friendship and surrender; the heavy marching column came trailing up the road and the affair at Baliuag was over.

But Ned Pevear still stood beside his captured battery. The truth was hard to swallow; once again his pride had taken a "header" and been brought ignominiously down. In spite of General Lawton's kindly words of explanation and approval, the loud

laughter of the men and the fact that he had been sadly fooled rankled harshly within him.

"Just wooden guns," he said, "and no good at all. Ned Pevear, you've just been April-fooled, and that's all there is about it. Why weren't you real ones, you dummies?"

Indignant at the deception by which he had been victimized, he spoke aloud in his wrath and angrily kicked the stolid Quaker gun.

"What's wrong, young'un? Wouldn't the gun go off?" came the inquiry, as a soiled figure in khaki slouched down upon the despised Quaker gun.

"It's just a wooden thing," replied Ned to the tired straggler from the ranks. "I captured the three of them and thought perhaps I'd get mention in the general orders. And look at them! Frauds, that's what they are—Filipino frauds and Gugu cheats! Just wooden, and no good at all!"

"Well," drawled the straggler, digging his knife into the wooden barrel of the Quaker gun, "there are others. Quaker guns aren't the only wooden things that are no good in a fight; some of them wear white flannel and gold braid, and take it all out in looks—just like these things, young'un. Got any tobacco?"

Now it happened that Ned had supplied himself from the commissary stores with that "soldier's necessity," not for his own use but as a help to weary

soldiers whom the "weed" did sometimes hearten up mightily. He drew the fine cut from his pocket and handed the tin-foiled parcel to the soldier.

"You're a trump, young'un," said the straggler, seizing the tobacco with eagerness. "What's your name and regiment?"

Ned explained.

"Who are you?" he asked his new friend.

"Me? O I'm Private Maskin of the Montanas —dead tired of this blasted campaigning, and dying to see home and mother. Say, want to raise some return money? I razeed a one-legged Gugu out yonder and he told me where I could scoop up some *dinero* he had buried back of Baliuag church. Help me dig it up and we'll divvy. What's war good for unless you can make something out of it? And my Filipino friend has got no use for it now. He's gone to the happy hunting grounds and I'm his heir-at-law. Come along. I'll retain you for my man of business and we'll divide the loot, eh?"

And thus it was that Ned Pevear first met Maskin, the free lance.

CHAPTER V

HOW THEY CHARGED THE BRIDGE AT SAN ISIDRO

"THAT's contrary to orders," said Ned, as he listened to the straggler's proposition.

"What is? To take your own?" demanded Maskin. "Don't I tell you, young'un, that the Gugu's dead, and he willed his *dinero* to me 'cause I helped him die easy. That's what I got for a drink of water; see! I'll give you half of it for the chew of tobacco."

"Things come high in this country," said Ned. "But I don't believe it's right. We're here to make the flag respected; and how are we going to do that if it covers looting and murder?"

"Why, parson, you talk like a book," said Maskin. "Who's looting and murdering? I'm not. I'm just taking my own, if the Gugu wasn't lying and I can locate the find. Better join me."

But Ned was firm. He knew that the general's orders were strict and that the Filipinos were to be made into friends and not molested, save on the firing line. He had seen a soldier disciplined for

"lifting" a chicken. What would happen if the hidden property of the natives were hunted for and taken? He certainly would have no share in such a transaction. And he bluntly told the straggler so.

"All right, all right, old chap; don't peach on me though," the soldier replied. "I've got to get the rhino so's to get back to home and mother, don't you know, and here's my chance. Can't you give me a lift into town? I'm dead tired."

The distance was not far and the wiry Filipino ponies can easily carry double; so, bidding Maskin get up behind, Ned mounted his pony and took the straggler as far as the city gate, which they entered along with the rear guard.

There Maskin slipped from the pony's back with a "good-by, lad; sorry you won't go divvies with me," and disappeared among the nipa huts, while Ned rode on to the plaza of Baliuag, where the general was already detailing searching parties to hunt out and confiscate the insurgent stores and supplies which were reported to be in Baliuag.

Next day, Ned rode on with the general in the advance on San Miguel. Scouts and outflankers led the column out of green shaded Baliuag and between hibiscus hedges, past the thatched huts that formed the outskirts of the town and over the dusty, broken highways that stretched across the broad, low-diked rice fields northward to San Miguel de Mayumo.

Behind the scouts and outflankers marched the advance guard; then followed the main column; behind that came the lumbering wagon train and then the rear guard of Colonel Sinclair's men. The general and his staff rode swiftly past the long and often straggling lines of regulars, volunteers, coolies and Tagalog "amigos," pushing on to the front, and Ned gave a laughing wave of his hand as he galloped past a high-piled *carrameta* drawn by a tandem team of water buffaloes, where, under the hot black top of the *carrameta* (the high, two-wheeled covered carriage of the well-to-do Filipinos), he spied his friend Maskin, perched upon the pinnacle of the battalion luggage that filled the confiscated vehicle.

"Hullo, Maskin!" he cried out in greeting. "Tired as ever, eh? How did the *dinero* pan out?"

"Ah, there! young'un," came back the greeting of the luggage guard; "what's your hurry? Pan out, d'ye say? N. G. that's what it was. N. G. I'll never trust a Gugu again, living or dead. But say, Neddie, mum's the word, you know. I don't want the boys to get the laugh on me."

On past the wagon train the staff galloped, until staff and train were both brought to a stop, as the big mule teams and government wagons that led the train halted in discomfiture at a deep mud hole that made the vile road impassable.

"Stuck, eh?" said the general, taking in the situ-

ation. "Hullo, Ned, just rush your pony around the break and tell Captain Masterman to detail two companies of the Minnesotas to bring down a couple of houses and fill up the hole."

Ned dashed across the broken road and in five minutes more proudly came back with the stalwart Minnesota men. They had promptly wrecked two of the nearest nipa "country houses" and, bringing the walls and roofs on their shoulders, had quickly corduroyed the break by laying their "building material" across the great pile of brush with which they had first filled the mud hole.

Then the delayed wagon train crossed the impromptu bridge, while general and staff pushed on toward the front.

Still far in advance, scouts and outflankers moved cautiously on with no enemy in sight or hearing. Suddenly, out of the wide-stretching mask of cane brake, came a stream of spattering steel-cased bullets, and once again a fight was on.

On past the reserve galloped the general and staff.

"Keep 'em steady and take plenty of time," said the general to the officers of the reserve. "The sun's too hot to hustle and I'll send word when you're wanted."

The sun was hot; it toppled over more than one brave fellow who had no fear for the Filipino bullets.

"It's the roasting old sun I'm afraid of," was the complaint as, here and there, a sufferer dropped by the way.

But Ned rode on with the staff. He must be in the fight, he had decided; he must retrieve the ignominy of the wooden guns.

There were no wooden guns in this fight. Swish and spat through the bamboo canes rained a sweep of Mauser bullets from a screened and ambushed foe, and the advancing Americans were deep in disgust over so one-sided a small-arm fight.

"Why don't they get in the open where we can see 'em?" one of the boys demanded. "We'll wipe up the floor with 'em if they give us a chance."

Suddenly, from the rear, comes the cry: "Road there! Gangway for the battery! She's going in!"

The advancing column gives the road, and down the living lane of perspiring, half-clothed soldiers with sway and leap, and rumble and roll, dashes the mountain battery drawn by steaming horses.

The drivers, astride the big horses, urge them on with whip and spur and yell; their cry is echoed by the cannoneers on the caissons and by the excited lines through which they dash; and not a man but is eager to be ahead on the firing line.

The order came for the battalion to move on.

"Hit her up! We're going in, boys!" shouted the dusty, bronzed western volunteers, and as they

double-quicked to the firing line Ned could scarcely be held back from joining their swinging files.

"O, General! can't I go with them? I want to see the row?" the lad demanded, eagerness and excitement in his voice.

"How can you, Ned? You're a non-combatant; you've got no right in there," the general replied, his eye still on his advancing troops.

"But you can let me. Give me something to do, sir. Won't you order me in?"

The general rested his glance for an instant on the boy. General Lawton always did love a fighter.

"I've got nothing for you to do there, Ned," he said. "And you are safer here. I can't give you permission and I've no orders to give. But look'a here! there's the road, there are the soldiers, and you have got a horse. Who's keeping you? Your pony isn't lame, is he?"

Ned was quick witted and he saw through the general's unofficial permission. Without a word, with but a salute to his chief, he urged his pony off at a gallop and was speedily following the advancing volunteers.

The gun and ammunition belt with which he had provided himself anew at Baliuag would come in handy now, he thought, as springing from his pony he hobbled him out of the range of the cane screen ambuscade and hastened to the firing line.

"Well young fellow, what do you want? What's your regiment?" demanded a begrimed lieutenant who himself had gun and ammunition belt and was aiding as well as directing his men.

Ned saluted.

"Special aid for General Lawton, sir: let off as a volunteer for the firing line," he said.

"Good for you, son!" cried the lieutenant, giving the boy a hearty slap in the back. "Go in and win."

The mountain battery puffed and boomed; the metal cases from the ammunition belts of the fighters on the line clicked in trained and sweaty hands, as guns were loaded again and again and the roar of the Krag-Jorgensens answered the "high keyed note" of the Filipino Mausers.

Prone on his face, like his hundred comrades on the firing line, Ned raised himself for each aim and pumped away at his gun, shooting wildly, of course, and seeing nothing at which to aim.

One instant he sprang unnecessarily to his feet to readjust his loosened ammunition belt; that instant he felt a shock; he staggered and fell.

A helping hand dragged him out of range.

"Up you come, old chappie," said the voice that went with the hand. "Where are you hit?"

"In my side, I think," the boy replied, dazed and wondering. "Jucks! but that scared me. Am I—am I killed?"

"Take it easy, old man! Why, it's Neddie! What you doing here? Let's see, I don't find any blood. I think—why—hello! look at yourself, lad! By the great Jumping Jupiter! but that's the closest call I've seen yet. Look here! Tore the whole side of your ammunition belt off, as if they'd cut it with a knife and not even scratched you. Neddie, I'll have to tie to you. You've got a charmed life."

It was even so; the ammunition belt was gone; shot clean away by a spent bullet that had not even grazed the boy's skin. And, Ned, recovering from his shock and fright, felt his hand grasped by the comrade who was examining him, and, with clearer eyes, recognized again his friend of the Baliuag battery and the *carrameta* luggage pile—Maskin the straggler.

"Why, what are you doing here, Maskin?" he said. "I thought you were back in the wagon train."

"So I was," Maskin replied. "But it is too dead slow there, and I was tired of doing nothing, so I just straddled a stray buffalo and rode up to the front—just in time to save you!"

"From what—being scared to death?" laughed Ned. "I really was scared, though, when that thing struck my belt—thought I was just shot in half. And I'm all right, you say?"

"Right as a trivet," declared his friend.

"All right! let's sail in again," said Ned. "Lend me a few cartridges won't you? Mine have gone to join Aguinaldo, I guess."

"In you go," Maskin assented. Then he cried, "No you don't, though. See there! By the Jumping Jupiter, they're on the run! the general's flanked them. He's the boy to do it, eh?"

The straggler was right. Above the bamboo brake, Ned now saw the flutter and toss of the retreating tri-colored flag with the Filipino sun and stars; then, through the brake and fast along the dusty road raced the fleeing insurgents, disclosed and outflanked by one of Lawton's favorite maneuvers. For the grim Indian fighter had drawn back his center, thrown out a far extended skirmish line, right and left, and almost surrounding the Filipino fighters in a great semi-circle had just missed "corralling" them all, when, in the very nick of time for them, they had seen their danger and, taking to the road and their own swift heels, raced for dear life to Maasin and safety. It was a tussle of determination, tactics and brains against a persistent but unskilful foeman; and Lawton had won.

"Well, Ned!" the general cried as the boy reported. "You were in it, eh? How do you like it?"

Ned told his experience.

"It was a close call, General," he said.

"Close! I should say so, my son," said the general. "See here; you're too eager. I'll have to hold you at my elbow, I reckon, if I'm going to keep my interpreter. But you're a plucky chap. Come back with me to Baliuag. I've got to help install a civil government there, and I shall need you in all that lingo and palaver."

So Ned became a civilian again. He helped administer the oath to the "Capitan Municipal" whom the people of Baliuag chose as mayor, and after that, he aided the provost marshal distribute among the returning poor of the town the great quantities of *pilai,* or unhulled rice, that were confiscated in the storehouses of Baliuag.

Then, a few days after, he joined the general who, driving the insurgents from San Miguel, was pressing on to San Isidro.

Between Sibul and San Isidro, however, ran a rapid creek, called a river by the country folk, though scarce fifty feet wide. It was too deep to be forded and the wooden bridge that spanned it was commanded by the Filipino trenches with both frontal and enfilading fire.

"Don't give 'em a chance to wreck the bridge," said Lawton. "We need it for our supplies. Here Pevear; Ned! ride to Colonel Summers and tell him

to save the bridge and scatter the insurgents. And hello, Ned!" he cried after the galloping aid; "You keep out of the fight. Do you hear?"

But Ned's ears were deaf to the last order as he dashed ahead with his message to the colonel.

When he came up with the advance, the Filipino wreckers were already at their work of destruction.

"Save it?" cried the colonel, as Ned delivered his message. "That's what we're here for; see, my son? There go the scouts and the Oregons. Watch them work."

But Ned was not there to watch; he wished to be part of the proceedings. Already he was in the ranks of the Oregon boys, and kept on until he came up with the scouts.

Like the bold Romans of Horatius's day, in Macaulay's poem, the Filipinos were bravely at work. Already had they

> "Seized hatchet, bar and crow
> And smote upon the planks above
> And loosed the props below,"

and, from their trenches across the stream, their comrades now swept the bridge with a fire of bullets.

But Thornton and his scouts cared neither for insurgent trench nor Filipino fire. They were there to save the bridge, and save it they would. Careless of consequences, fearless as to ambush, and indiffer-

ent to the fire of the trenches the daring scouts, with the intrepid Harrington in the lead, dashed upon the bridge with a yell that scared the bridge wreckers from their work of destruction and startled the gunners in the hostile trenches.

In the surf-like and resistless rush of the scouts rode Ned Pevear, his voice tuned to the chorus of the yells; close behind him came the Oregons, quite as noisy and determined. Again and again the enemy's fire swept the wooden bridge; but the scouts held the right of way; they kept on; they broke into the trenches and fought hand to hand for an instant with those of the enemy who had thought to stay—and stayed forever.

The charge was irresistible. The bridge was saved; the trenches won; the enemy fled in hot haste into San Isidro, unable to withstand the furious onrush of the Americans. But Harrington, the dauntless scout from Oregon, dropped dead in the fight; the terror of the Filipino outposts had fallen and Thornton declared that his own right hand would have been a less costly loss, for Harrington was his main reliance.

So they pushed on to San Isidro. But Aguinaldo was not there as reported; and when the town was occupied, the Filipino army flying to the north, and one of the main objects of the campaign achieved, both the general and his volunteer aid were

not really satisfied. For they had hoped to bag Aguinaldo.

The general pulled at his white mustache and wondered if the Filipinos would wait long enough at Gapan to give him a chance to finish them. He promptly ordered the column to march at once against the place, and had already nearly yielded to Ned's request to join the scouts and hunt down Aguinaldo, when an orderly arrived with the information that under the flag of truce General Gregorio del Pillar requested safe conduct to Manila to confer with the American Peace Commission as to a termination of hostilities.

"That almost sounds like business," said the general. "But they've asked for that too many times. I don't trust them on any peace business. I'll give them safe conduct though and, by George! Ned Pevear, I'm going to send you back with them—as part of the escort. You're too much in evidence here. I feel just as if my own boy were here, running a match with fate; I couldn't feel more responsible if he were. You'll pass Colonel Sinclair at Bustos on your way back. My compliments to him and say I've sent you on escort duty to Manila. No, I'm fixed; you can't worry me out of that, young man. Why, I'm giving you an honorable commission and you're kicking because it isn't dangerous. How do you know it isn't?"

How did he? But no one can foretell the future, and Ned felt just then that he was being cheated out of his opportunity.

He said nothing, however. When the general made up his mind it was not to be changed. Even had Ned desired to argue the case there was no time; for just then the orderly announced the arrival of Pillar and his fellow members of the Filipino Peace Commission.

But, as he stood behind the general who advanced to welcome the envoys courteously, the boy started, as did also one of the four envoys. For the brown man and the white boy recognized each other, and Ned knew that one of the Peace envoys was no other than his friend—or foe—of the cascoe in the Pasig, the treacherous flag of truce, and the dummy battery before the trenches at Baliuag.

CHAPTER VI

IN THE CONGRESS HALL AT MALOLOS

BEYOND the start of recognition there was nothing to indicate the "friction" between the brown and white. Ned felt that it was not his place to speak out or to denounce as a conspirator one who came under "safe conduct" in the sacred personality of a peace commissioner. Besides, the boy reasoned, even if the Filipino had tried to "run a plot" against the Americans "all was fair," he supposed, "in love and war;" and so he held his peace. But he felt scarcely ready to trust the native leader who put up dastardly plots or violated the flag of truce.

As for the envoy, he said nothing. He was simply on the defensive lest the boy should say something; but at last he decided that the young American did not recognize or was indifferent to him.

Neither the boy nor the man, however, had long time for speculation, for Ned's services were at once called into requisition. General Lawton's official interpreter was busy elsewhere, obtaining information from a former Filipino "congressman" turned

"amigo," and Ned was pressed into service by the general to hasten matters.

Del Pillar, the head of the Filipino commission, was also the general commanding the insurgent force which Lawton had been so valiantly fighting from Novaliches to San Isidro; and as Lawton always respected a fighter, be he friend or foe, he was courtesy itself, in his brusquely cultured way, as he greeted his opponent.

"This is General del Pillar, I suppose," he said, advancing to meet the brown boyish looking general with extended hand, his six feet two towering far above the scant five feet of Filipino generalship; "introduce us, Ned."

So Ned proceeded to his work of peaceful introduction. But at the first sound of his excellent Spanish, grown easy by constant use, the dark skinned envoy whom Ned had thrice encountered started perceptibly.

Then, as Del Pillar presented him through Ned as a major on Aguinaldo's staff, the Tagalog major, bowing low over the American general's hand, looked up quickly at the young interpreter.

"The American boy speaks Spanish?" he queried.

"*Si, senor; aqui se habla espagnol,*" replied Ned with just a bit of emphasis on the *aqui.*

"Ah! *here;* but not on the cascoe in the Pasig, eh?" was the major's significant comment.

"In times of danger, sir," said the boy, "one forgets everything but his native tongue;" whereupon the Filipino smiled so broadly at the lad's shrewd reply, that General Lawton demanded, "What's he saying, Ned?"

"Complimenting my Spanish, General," Ned replied.

"H'm!" was the general's comment, "just you put it to him in Spanish, Ned, that American boys know what o'clock it is every time."

The ceremonies were soon over and, that same day, the commissioners, in charge of Lieutenant King, one of Lawton's aids, and with a picked escort of American soldiers took the southward way to Malolos, where they were to board a railway train, specially requisitioned, to take them to Manila. Lawton sent orders by his lieutenant to the commanders of the forces of his expedition along their route to give them all possible accommodation and courtesy, and thus the commissioners and their escort took the road to Manila.

And in the file of soldiers detailed for escort duty, Ned recognized an acquaintance.

"Why, hello! Maskin," he cried, "are you one of us? How's that?"

"I applied for special duty and got it, Neddie," the soldier replied. "Fact is, I'm dead tired of field

duty and want to get back to Manila to rest. So here I am."

Ned laughed merrily.

"You're always tired, eh, Maskin?" he said.

"Born so," replied his friend; "and by constant attention to the matter I have learned in whatsoever state I am—United States or any other state—always to stay tired."

"You'd make a first rate bicycle," Ned remarked with another laugh; but the soldier received the joke with such absolute seriousness that Ned declared to himself that Maskin must have English blood in his veins. Ned always liked to have his jokes appreciated.

At Bustos, where they halted for rest next day, Ned joyfully greeted Colonel Sinclair, in command of the post.

"Why, Ned, dear boy!" cried the old colonel heartily; "so you're alive still, are you? I was afraid you'd get into some mischief on the firing line; for the general is always in front, and I'll be bound you're ahead of him, if possible."

Ned recalled his experiences at Baliuag and on the bridge at San Isidro; he also remembered the warning of the general's aid.

"Well, I can't very well drop behind, Colonel," he said. "You know they say that the general's staff

act as a cavalry screen for the advance. I've been part of the screen."

The colonel laughed loudly.

"You're a plucky chap, Ned," he said. "That's just the place I was afraid your father's son would be. Why, at Spottsylvania—" and then he went off in reminiscences of old time comradeship with Ned's father, the brevet major, while the son listened appreciatively. "But what are you doing now, my son?" he demanded.

"Just what that stowaway's card on the transport said, Colonel," Ned answered. 'Detailed for special service in the Philippines;' I'm interpreter to the commission, en route to Manila. Come and be introduced, sir."

So Colonel Sinclair went with the lad to "make his compliments" to the Filipino envoys.

"Did you notice one of those Gugu commissioners, Colonel?" Ned inquired of his old friend, as, ceremonies over, he sat in the colonel's quarters; "that major on Aguinaldo's staff, I mean?"

"Yes; pleasant-spoken sort of chap," replied the colonel. "What about him?"

"He's the fellow whose plot I overheard that day that General Lawton fished me out of the Pasig. He's the chap that fired on the flag of truce at Baliuag, and from whom I captured the wooden battery behind the Filipino trenches."

"So, so! your ghost friend, eh?" said the colonel. "That's funny isn't it?"

"Yes, sir, it is," replied Ned. "I did not say anything to the general. You're the only one I've told about it. What ought I to do? Report him or just watch him?"

"On general principles they'll all bear watching," declared the old Indian fighter, who had little respect for savage or half-civilized "hostiles." "But, on general principles, too, I'd keep my mouth shut, if I were you. The man is sacredly protected by his office and mission as a peace envoy; and nothing could be done with him. Plotting and treachery seem to be part of the Filipino code of war; so I suppose that lets him out. He can't hurt you inside the lines; and if he understands his duty he won't try it on. But, your eye is sharp; watch him, son."

"I suppose I'm only sort of volunteer hanger-on and not officially attached, Colonel," the boy said, with just a tinge of dissatisfaction; "but I should like to know just what my duty is."

"Your duty, my son," said the kindly old colonel, laying a hand on the boy's shoulder, "is just to do it. You're a good American, a follower of the flag, a defender and bulwark of the republic, and whether officially or unofficially detailed for service, you've just got to do your level best in defence of the flag, in support of the country's laws and in

maintenance of the power and dignity and honor of the United States of America. That's what brings me here, Ned, thousands of miles from home, fighting a miserable war with a mob of liberty claiming natives who do not understand us and who never will, so long as critics and kickers at home try to underrate the responsibilities of the republic, the valor of their own soldiers and the justice of the principle for which we are fighting here, amid fever, swamps, deluge and wily Filipinos. Just you obey orders, Ned; that's a soldier's first duty. It's a simple creed: obey your superiors and your country's laws, even if your superiors are sometimes like those wooden guns you charged so valiantly—no good—and even though the laws you must defend might be better made, perhaps, if you had a hand in their making. And, wherever you are, Ned; amid whatever surroundings and under whatever banner —remember the beautiful flag which your father fought to make supreme, and never do any thing to disgrace it or him or your own plucky, if sometimes heedless self."

The colonel scarcely ever spoke so long or so earnestly. Ned felt that he voiced the sentiment of the true soldier, however, and as he thanked him for his good advice, he also mentally and openly promised to live up to the colonel's standard of duty.

Next day he bade his old friend good-by and went on to Malolos. The envoys and their escort reached the former Filipino capital at sunset. They were to take the special train to Manila in the morning; and Ned, off duty for a while, willingly joined his old comrade, Private Maskin for a look about the captured capital.

"I was in the fight that did the business here, Neddie," said the soldier, "and I know the place well. Let's take a look at the 'halls of congress.'"

They walked through the destroyed town, held by American troops, and Maskin showed Ned where the advance, like a great snake "uncoiled itself" across the lagoons and marshes; where, led by the gallant Funston, they had charged the bridges, stormed the trenches and fairly chased Aguinaldo and his "brown skins" out of their smoking capital and raised the stars and stripes in front of the insurgent headquarters.

"Lord! how those nipa huts did burn," said Maskin. "We didn't fire 'em, you know; the Gugus did that themselves. They even set the palace of the president in flames, and if we hadn't got in ahead of time they'd have fired the halls of congress. We were not in it with them for destruction. MacArthur's orders were so strict I couldn't get a chance at just a little hunt for *dinero;* and, as for looting,

Great Jupiter! I'd 'a got myself into a peck of trouble and the guardhouse, too, if I'd lifted even a chicken."

"That's right enough," said Ned, laughing. "I'd been one of the provost marshal's squad to keep you there, you old 'bummer.' Orders must be obeyed. That's what Colonel Sinclair says, and he knows."

"But how'll I ever see home and mother, if I can't get a chance to raise the wind, Neddie?" demanded Maskin, dolefully.

"I believe you're an old fraud, Maskin," cried Ned with another of his sunny laughs; "why, you'd get tired of home and mother after you'd had one good sleep. I don't believe you've got any, either."

"Hear the lad! he doubts even my fondest dream," said Maskin, as he pushed the boy ahead of him, in pretended indignation, and together they entered the wrecked and deserted building in which Aguinaldo had been inaugurated president of the republic, and bolo men and native guards had maintained a half-savage state "when congress was in session."

There was little for them to see there. The artillery of the second division of MacArthur's command had established their camp in and about the building, and had made free use of the "republic's" property; but, while Maskin sat down to "rest" in the

outer hall, Ned picked his way over the piles of rubbish and stood for a minute beside one of the shaky pillars about whose capitals still hung the withering remnants of the Filipino inaugural decorations.

One thing impressed the American as he stood there amid the wreck of ambitions and the ruin of hopes—for boys do have a touch of sentiment in their natures and sympathize with defeat even when rejoicing over it—and that was, the apparent uselessness of it all.

"It is rough on these Filipino fellows," he said to himself. "They thought after they had downed Spain they would have things to themselves; but along we come and do it for them, and by George! they're not in at all. I'd be mad too; but then, I suppose it is as the colonel says: people are like children; they have to be spanked into seeing things the right way, sometimes; especially when, as in this case, the Filipino republic would be the wrong way and the United States is their best and rightful guardian; all the same, though—hello! what's that?"

Someone was moving stealthily through the big bare congress hall—two "someones" in fact. Through the gathering gloom Ned could scarcely make them out. He was just on the point of hailing or challenging the new comers when he caught the low-toned sound of the mellow Spanish speech and

saw that the two intruders were undersized—and that, to the American, always denoted the Filipino.

"It was somewhere hereabouts, Pablo," said one of the two shadowy forms, "that I hid the papers. Ah, so! it is here. See, I can feel the mark I made to guide me. Dig; dig quickly, brother, ere the cursed Americans come upon us—though none seem near us, praise the saints."

The two figures bent over the stone flooring behind the rise on which once had stood the president's chair of state, while Ned, watchful but uncertain, hesitated what to do.

The flooring was speedily broken and taken up and, with a swift Spanish exclamation of satisfaction, the chief of searchers thrust his hand in the hole.

So intent had Ned been upon this scene, ambushed as he was behind the pillars of the hall, that he did not hear the steps of a new comer. Not until a tall form slippped past him in the gloom did he recognize a new phase of the affair and know that Maskin was about to take a hand.

"Hello, boys!" said the soldier, standing arms akimbo, above the stooping searchers. "What's up? *Dinero?* or just your little loot? I speak for half."

The Filipinos sprang to their feet, their hands grasping the recovered treasure.

THE INTERRUPTED TREASURE-HUNT.

"Ned upset the Filipino deftly and suddenly."

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"*Carramba!*" came the exclamation of surprise from the chief of the two. "Vile American, spy, thief! it is ours. You die! *Castila;* take that!"

And a keen edged Malay creese darted out from the man's belt so swiftly that Maskin, taken unawares, would have quickly ended his wandering life had it not been for the swifter move of the boy behind the pillar. Ned had stolen from his post of observation as Maskin spoke and, certain that trouble was to follow, he darted in all unarmed as he was, between the two, heedless of all save his big friend's danger.

"Not if I know it!" he cried; and with the swift leg-thrust and ankle-lock born of the practice-field and the gym, he upset the Filipino so deftly and suddenly that the brown assassin fell heavily to the floor, the averted creese flying through the air.

The frightened Pablo with a desperate movement dragged his companion to his feet and rushed him from the darkened congress hall; but, even as they ran, Ned saw the roll of paper fluttering in his hand and made a dash for it.

The swift footed Filipinos were too quick, however, for the American lad, and speedily out-stripped him, vanishing in their flight.

Ned turned and rejoined his friend.

Maskin was already digging into the hole behind the president's dais.

"Just my luck," he said. "'Tis here! 'tis there! 'tis gone!' The ghost of Hamlet's father simply wasn't in it with these Filipino treasure-hiders. And I thought my return money was sure this time. Hello! Neddie," he said rising to his feet and grasping the boy's hands. "You were a friend in need that time. I ought to have known that every Gugu has a knife up his sleeve. But you were too quick for him. Mighty clever upset that was you gave him. I'll have to try a fall with you. Where'd you learn it?"

"At school," the boy replied. "But say, Maskin," he added in panting surprise; "do you know who that fellow was that tried to cut you?"

"No, Neddie, I did not see his face," the soldier replied. "I wasn't looking for that. I was trying to spot the *dinero*. Who was it?"

Ned laughed softly. He was getting cooler now.

"How he must love me!" he said. "I'm up to him every time. It was my friend of the cascoe and the battery, that I've told you about—Aguinaldo's major, the peace commissioner."

"Whew!" Maskin gave a low whistle. "Nice thing for him to be doing while he's under safe-conduct—looting the busted congress hall. But say, I did get some of his booty. Grabbed at it just as

he fell. Wait till I shake it out and let's have a look at it."

He held up a folded cloth; fingered a corner of it and cleverly flung it flat.

"Flag of some sort, eh?" he said. "The ensign of the once proud Filipino republic, I reckon. Got a match, Neddie? Let's see what it is, for sure."

Ned, always provided with the unnecessary necessities, fished a match from his pocket, struck it on his boot-sole and by its fleeting flare the two investigated their trophy.

"Well, well! what have we struck?" said Maskin; "creese and sword and skull; white stripe across the field; Filipino sunburst, crown and K. K. K. By the Jumping Jupiter! that's a find that'll sell for stamps, later on. Know it, Neddie? You don't? Well, it's the Tagalog K. K. K. flag—the emblem of their big do-us-up-to-death-and-vengeance secret society, the Katipunan. Say! they've marked us if they ever catch us. Watch out, boy! for this means trouble for We, Us and Company."

CHAPTER VII

"A FILE OF RUTHLESS STEEL"

"WHAT will you do with it? Turn it in?" queried Ned, as the match flickered out and the two turned for the door of the congress hall and went watchfully out into the night.

"Turn it in? Not much," replied Maskin. "Finding's keepings, here, you know, and possession is nine points of the law. This trophy'll be worth money—later on, when I'm back with home and mother, don't you know."

"No, I don't know, Maskin," said Ned laughing. "That's just your fairy tale, same as you're always being tired. Tired! why, you'll never be that till you're punctured."

"That's all you know—say! what's the joke?" Maskin broke in with his query. 'That's the second time you've got it off on me. What was that t'other day about a bicycle being tired. I studied it all out and it wasn't bad, I don't think. And this is the brother to it, eh?"

"O, get a diagram," replied Ned, and again he

made up his mind that his restless comrade "had English blood in him, for sure."

"Did he see you, do you think, Neddie—that envoy chap?" queried Maskin, not noticing Ned's remark.

"Trust him for that," the boy replied. "He never fails to. But say! they got away with the papers. What had we better do?"

"O, let well enough alone. What do you want to bother about it for?" the easy going adventurer replied.

"But it may be treasonable correspondence, or something of that sort, you know," said Ned.

"Well, it don't pay to meddle with other people's correspondence. Sure to get you in trouble," was Maskin's comment. "You've got enough to carry, if that envoy chap recognized you and this K. K. K. business marks you for its own. Fellow telling me the other day what these Kalathumpian chaps—or whatever their blasted name is—do to any body they're down on. Pleasant little things like slicing ears and pulling out tongues and all that, don't you know. They say that the chap in the opera—that Jap fellow with his boiling oil and melted lead—could just go to school to these Filipino Ku-Kluxers. Watch out, and don't let 'em practice on you, Neddie."

"Not if the court knows itself," replied Ned.

"But I tell you, I would like to know what those papers were. And I'll find out some time."

"Well, better not let on about them now," said Maskin; "it might get us into trouble or keep us here, and I'm tired; I want to get back to Manila and take a blooming good rest."

"I won't let on if the Gugu major don't," Ned declared. "You can rest assured of that. But if that slippery eel of an envoy tries to come down on me in any way he'll find he's waked up the wrong passenger."

The envoy made no sign, however, of "coming down" on the boy; neither by word or look did he intimate that he knew anything of the encounter in the congress hall at Malolos. But none the less was Ned determined to "watch out" as both Colonel Sinclair and Private Maskin advised, and unravel the mystery of the secreted papers, even though he ran the risk of the K. K. K.

The visit of the Filipino commissioners amounted to nothing. They asked for a cessation of hostilities until "the president" Aguinaldo could learn what the Filipino people desired; but the American commissioners could do nothing except insist upon the demands of the government of the United States—submission by the islanders to the authority and merciful measures of the United States.

So back to the Filipino lines went the native com-

missioners after a brief stay at Manila, and back with them went Lieutenant King and the escort, including Ned Pevear.

At San Isidro General Lawton dismissed the envoys with courteous farewells and mutually expressed regrets that their mission had not been successful.

"The plan of government offered us," one of the Filipinos said to the general, "was a good colonial system. But why should your nation, with its grand constitution seek to make a colony of our people who have for so long fought Spain to secure for ourselves the same rights that your constitution gives?"

"Trust us and we will help you," the general replied. "But the first step towards trust is submission. The United States of America are always just. We seek the good of your people rather than your harm."

"We have strong friends in the United States," the envoy declared. "If our move toward peace is not accepted now, it will be when your government changes leaders. In that belief we continue our resistance."

"Friends in the United States, eh?" said Ned to himself as he translated the envoy's assertion. "How little the folks at home know what this fuss in the Philippines means. I'll bet I could give 'em points. Friends indeed! I call 'em traitors?"

It was a boy's decision; but sometimes, even under youthful exaggeration, lies a grain of truth.

At the advanced picket lines beyond San Isidro the escort withdrew and the Filipino envoys were with their own once more. But, as the major on Aguinaldo's staff passed into a nipa hut to await the coming of his own detail, through a hastily made opening in the other side a sinewy boyish form forced its way, and the first intimation of hostilities that the envoy had was when a strong, firm hand covered his mouth, and a low determined voice fell in a whisper upon his ear.

"Major," the communication came in excellent Spanish, "I could not touch you when you were an envoy under safe conduct. Your person was sacred, though your actions were treacherous. Now, we are both free from restrictions. Hand over those papers you dug up at Malolos, or I'll choke you like a snake."

There is something so insistive in the American grip and something so compelling in the American voice that the cowed and surprised Filipino had no alternative but submission. He could not call aloud with that firm hand covering his mouth; he could not resist that python-like arm about his neck. A struggle, a squirm, one unavailing attempt at escape and he gave in unconditionally. He drew a roll of papers from inside his military blouse and handed

them to his captor whose wary eyes permitted no other move to dagger or pistol belt.

"I must take your word for it, Major," the American said. "Do you swear to me that these are the papers you unearthed at Malolos?"

The major's head nodded vigorously in affirmation; the major's hand went solemnly aloft as if calling upon heaven to witness the truth of his silent declaration.

The next moment found him on his back, rolled and smothered in the rugs on which he lay and when he had freed himself and recovered sufficiently to shout in choicest Tagalog and most vehement Spanish for the guard to follow and seize or cut down the thief, the robber, the *Castila,* the *Americano*— behold! the American was gone, and the major on Aguinaldo's staff could only pour out his soul in execration of his men and in vivid denunciation of the bold, brutal methods of "the American highwayman."

Meanwhile two Americans were "hiking it" for dear life to the American lines, uncertain and vanishing targets for the aroused Filipino sentries.

"Did you get 'em, Neddie?" demanded Maskin.

"Sure," panted the fleeing Ned, saving his breath. "Got 'em here, safe and sound;" and he patted his flannel shirt in evidence.

"Good boy! I'm proud of you," cried Maskin.

"I had my gun trained on that hole you made in the nipa, and if anybody but you came out, he'd never gone back alive. What are they? Let's see 'em."

"Haven't seen them myself," Ned replied, "and no one will till they get into Lawton's hands."

"H'm!" grunted Maskin, "you're the worst I ever saw for sticking to rules. Perhaps they're bank notes."

"Well, they are not mine if they are," said Ned. "They belong to the government."

"Neddie, you're no good," declared Maskin "You've got sand, and you'd be a oner at looting; but what's the good of squeezing the Gugus for *dinero* if you don't keep it?"

"Right is right, old man," responded Ned. "These are, no doubt, important papers that the government must see. Right here Lawton is the government; and he's going to see 'em."

And that brief declaration brought the two amateur raiders safe within the lines.

"Ned, you're a trump!" cried the general as the boy reported his action. "I don't know about your methods," he added slowly, "or whether they'd be judged up to the code of war; but sometimes we have to fight fire with fire, and the presence of that assassin on a protected embassy was an outrage. And you waited until he was on his own ground and you were absolved from the bar of non-interference.

It's the best thing I've seen in the campaign. Now, for the papers."

Ned placed the "mystery of Malolos" in the general's hand. Lawton removed the wrapper.

"What! why they're printed stuff," he said. "Papers or something—and from America! What under the sun can they be? Oh—ah—hem!" he remarked, as he ran his eye rapidly over the printed page. Then he threw back his head and laughed loud and long.

"What is it, General, a joke?" queried Ned, devoured with curiosity and oblivious of military discipline.

"A joke on you, my son," said the general; "and yet not so much of a joke after all. Beg Major Starr to see me at once—or hold on! You ought to know what you captured. Another Quaker battery, my lad, that may kick those who trained it on us, if they keep it up. These are anti-imperialist documents from America—the very thing on which the Filipino envoy based his declaration that they'd keep it up until our government changes leaders; this is one of the methods of the friends of the Filipinos in America. Ned, lad," continued the general soberly, "I don't like this war and I never have. But it was a duty thrust upon us unsought—upon the government of the United States and upon us who are its defenders. What then do you think of the men

at home who by their—unwise actions,—I won't give 'em the strong word they merit—hamper and even jeopardize us with things like this?" and the general struck the pamphlets with a sad sternness. "It's a fire in the rear!" he continued. "I tell you, Ned, that if I am ever shot down by a Filipino bullet it might as well come from one of my own men; for you see, I know,—I am certain—that the Filipinos keep up their useless fighting here chiefly because of the lying reports, and the treacherous documents such as these, sent out from America. But, there, I ought not to talk that way to you, my son; these papers set me off. It's all right; we'll down 'em yet, in spite of these shots from the rear. Pray send Major Starr to me. I won't forget what you did, lad, even though you didn't bring in the enemy's plan of campaign. It was a plucky thing to do, and I'll remember it."

Ned saluted and withdrew.

"Just some fake broadsides from America," he declared, greatly disappointed; "and I thought they were something that would bag the whole Filipino business. That's just my luck. But the general's awfully sober about it. I hope no Filipino bullet or any of that miserable stuff from home will ever turn him down. He's as brave as they make 'em."

Lawton *was* brave, as those who had the ruling of

things in the Philippines well knew. Others were as brave; but Lawton was resistless. For that reason he was recalled to Manila to lead a new campaign in Southern Luzon, and, as bold and as thorough as the one with which he had swept the north of insurgents, scattered or captured the leaders and sent Aguinaldo fleeing for his life before the ever advancing charges of his weary and barefooted but self-sustaining and victorious American battalions. Again the Filipino hostiles acknowledged and feared the relentless vigor of "the sleepless one."

Back to Manila with the general went Ned Pevear; and with him, too, by especial invitation, he went on the short and successful expedition into southern Luzon which was to "bottle up" Pio del Pilar and his "army of the south" in the bag-like peninsula that stretches from Laguna de Bay to the Devil's Strait.

Resistlessly southward moved that "file of ruthless steel." Out from San Pedro Macati, over the ridge of Guadaloupe, leaping deep gulches and wading through high grass and chaparral, in rain that chilled not, and under glorious skies, laughing at discomfort in the firm belief that Lawton meant business and that there was work for them ahead, that grim Indian fighter's picked command swept

down through Cavité—Lawton leading with his escort—which meant, of course, Ned Pevear in the van.

Sunstroke and fever floored more than one stalwart regular and seasoned volunteer; the crackle-crackle of the Mauser bullet ended now and then in blood and sometimes in death; but not until Paranaque was flanked and Las Pinas was made a camp did the real fighting begin over the mud flats of Malibay and the bridge of the Zapote.

And there it began with a vengeance. At the bridge over the Zapote, the insurgents showed themselves at last. On the Bacoor side of the narrow river they had strongly entrenched themselves; they had burned the bridge in the center to prevent the Americans from crossing, and at all available points, Filipino sharpshooters and turncoat amigos had their rifles trained on the bridge and river, determined to hold back the American advance.

Nearer and nearer came that "ruthless file of steel" which had cleared the Guadaloupe ridges, swept the valley at Las Pinas and won the town of Paranaque. Always in the advance had ridden Lawton and his staff and, all in vain, had the little brown sharpshooters of Cavité, Laguna, and Batangas muttered a charm over their rifle bullets as they sought to bring to earth the big man in white on the

great black horse—"the sleepless one" who knew no fear and defied the bullets of the enemy.

"Why, Ned, my boy," he said as they swept into action, when the reconnoissance of the 21st Infantry at the mud flats of Malibay turned withdrawal into advance and victory as Lawton galloped up to rally them, "why, Ned, you look as anxious as a rookie and I thought you were a seasoned soldier. What's the matter? 'Tisn't so very hot; you'll get used to the Mausers in a minute. They do a lot of singing, but they don't often hit."

"Why, General," replied Ned, open-eyed but troubled in countenance, "I'm not scared about myself. It's you I'm worrying about. The boys would all feel a big sight easier if you'd only lie down as they do on the firing line."

The general laughed.

"Up or down, it won't make a bit of difference to me, my son," he said. "If the bullet's made that's going to hit me, why, I'll get it when my turn comes, that's all. So don't you fret, if I don't."

And the stalwart figure of this "man who could do things" dashed into the fight, carried the enemy's position, and, reinforced by the fighting marines from monitor and gunboat, cut a way for his command, "literally through fire and blood" through treacherous bayous and a desperate enemy to where

Ovenshine's brigade, marching out from captured Paranaque, joined the general in the yet more desperate charge upon the trenches that commanded the bridge at Zapote.

Nature fought for the Filipinos in that campaign. Over roads heavy with mud and under a relentless June sun, whose fierce rays had already bowled out over a thousand invalids and given the insurgents time to rally in the trenches of the Zapote, Lawton and his men halted at the banks for battle, threatened with mighty odds. But there was no hesitation about the general; out of his living wall of khaki and steel leaped the fire of shot and shell from rifle and from battery; there was no time to waste; his men were in the open, exposed to the sun and the fire from the well-constructed trenches.

"They're putting up a great fight," cried the general as he watched the determined resistance of the Filipinos; "it's the bravest defence I've struck from them."

The brown men lay dead in heaps about these trenches; the fight began to tell heavily on the American line; one side or the other must finally yield; but Lawton did not know the word. At last there came a sign of wavering in the hostile trenches; the brave little brown men in blue and red withered and turned before the ceaseless American fire.

"Now boys! in and after them," shouted the gen-

eral; and the regulars dashed into the water without an instant's hesitation and swimming the Zapote, forced the trenches and sent the broken enemy flying over the fields and into the fancied security of their second line of trenches.

After the swimmers' advance, by broken girder and by a distant ford, other fighters followed; the marines with their Maxims and their rapid fire Colts supported Lawton's flanking maneuver and clearing the jungle foot by foot, carried the second line of trenches and chased the insurgents behind the fortifications of Imus.

Then they halted, in true American style, just long enough to shelter the fleeing women and children from the rigors of war and to feed the hungry natives from their own scant supplies.

It had been a fierce, hot fight; but the strong Filipino force that had been gathering for a determined attack on Manila had been whipped, overthrown and scattered, and Ned Pevear, at least and at last, felt satisfied with his share of the work and the glory.

And well he might be. For grown cooler by experience and more cautious by his successful failures, Ned was now out for a record. Under the Zapote bridge, swimming the river with the regulars, he saw a squad of brown men about a Filipino cannon, which was still smoking from recent action. The regulars landed and charged the empty trenches; the

Filipinos under the bridge wavered an instant, and then grappled their gun to rush it off the field.

"That's a sure enough gun this time, and I'll get it," Ned declared to himself. "Volunteers!" he cried; "who'll go for the piece with me?"

"I'm with you, Neddie," came the answer, scarce waiting for which the boy with a yell dashed upon the battery of one. He relied upon the American yell for its usual result of scattering the natives into instant flight; but, when they dropped the ropes and would have turned to flee, their officer drove them back, in halting Spanish blended with unmistakable American "cuss words." And then Ned saw that the officer in charge of the gun was a white man, and, sadder still, an American.

"A traitor! a bloody traitor!" he cried; "down with him, Maskin. Bowl him over! No quarter to a renegade."

"I'm with you, Neddie," again came the assurance of the long-legged soldier. "You get the gun; I'll reckon with the blooming blackguard."

But the Filipino gun crew, spurred by the desperation of their renegade captain's knowledge that he was fighting with a halter around his neck, swooped down upon the big *Americano* so vigorously that he was forced back for an instant, and then Ned realized that he was face to face with a determined renegade, and practically unarmed, for he had dis-

charged his revolver as he landed dripping from the river.

"Surrender! surrender, you low down traitor! or I'll shoot you like a dog," he shouted.

"Not if I know myself, Johnny," retorted the man without a country. "'Rah for the Filipinos! Surrender yourself! I've got the drop on you."

Surrender? Nothing was further from Ned Pevear's mind. Straight out from the shoulder with a swift left-hander flew his doubled fist, with a direct boxing-school lunge. Taken between the eyes the renegade staggered back from his gun and Ned leaped upon it.

"Fairly won!" he cried. "Surrender, you," and he flung his empty pistol at the renegade's head.

There came a sharp report, and Ned, just springing forward for another tussle, fell backward across the captured gun; that same instant the rifle behind him spoke out sharp and sure; and as the routed Filipinos fled up the river bank for safety, the renegade American, in his uniform of a Filipino major of artillery fell dead beneath his lost battery.

But Maskin's vindictive foot contemptuously spurned from his path the body of the traitor, and lifted from the captured gun the limp form of his friend.

"I got it, Maskin, didn't I?" the boy murmured, as he dropped off fainting.

"Got it sure enough, Neddie," said his friend. "Pray heaven, you haven't got too much, you plucky little beggar!"

And the tears streamed down the bronzed and impassive face of the hardened soldier of fortune, as he tenderly laid the volunteer aid beside the gun he had so valiantly charged, and tearing away the sleeve of his shirt for a "first-aid-to-injured" bandage, he anxiously leaned over his boy friend and with his hand upon Ned's heart waited, half-fearful, for the precious heart-throb.

CHAPTER VIII

AT THE GREAT BEND OF THE CHICO

"It beats! thank God!" Maskin cried exultantly and, with his knowledge of necessities, prepared to succor the stricken lad.

An orderly came climbing across the ruined bridge.

"Hullo, down there! Is the boy dead?" he called.

"Dead?" answered Maskin, his face in a grin; "Naw! He's tough, he is. You couldn't kill him, any more than you could General Lawton."

"Well, the general says get him over as soon as you can, if it is safe to move him," said the orderly.

"All right; run over your Pullman car," said Ned's comrade. "I'll fetch him in a reserved seat."

"Reckon you'll have to wait a bit, until we can get a conveyance or have the bridge repaired;" said the orderly. "The general saw the boy drop, and he wants to save him. But he's afraid the trenches aren't clear yet. You stay where you are, and he'll put a firing line here to cover you if the Gugus rally."

"Think I'm going to stay here until you build a bridge for me? Not much," replied Maskin. "This boy's going to the hospital—quick, I tell you, mate. There! up you come, Neddie."

"Can't I help you with him? Hoist him up here, and we'll haul him along the girders. They're only burned in the middle," said the orderly.

"And drop him overboard, *on roo-tee?*" replied Maskin. "Not much. I know an easier lay;" and, with Ned in his arms, the private walked to the river's edge. But as he turned from the captured cannon, he took one look at the dead renegade.

"H'm! Thought I knew him," he said, turning the body slightly with his foot. "It's Andrews of the Forty-sixth. Deserted a month ago for a Filipino girl and a major's commission with the Gugus. Just credit that battery up to the account of Edward Pevear, volunteer aid, won't you, Orderly, and keep an eye on it for him? There's two kind of Americans and here they are—Andrews, who's got no sand; and Neddie, who's got sand to burn. And Neddie gets across to our lines safe and sound, or I don't know a trick at swimming."

He certainly did know the trick. For, when he reached the water's edge, he lifted Ned tenderly but safely in his sinewy arms, and straightway waded into the river up to his arm-pits; then, as tenderly and deftly he placed the wounded boy between his

own shoulders and holding him on with one hand, he swam across the stream, amid a splash and spatter of Filipino bullets from the yet ambushed sharpshooters on the further shore.

But a fusillade from the American lines silenced the sharpshooting and, before Maskin had guided his burden half way across, a dozen stalwart boys from the Twenty-first were making quick strokes to his assistance and, amid a ringing cheer, fairly shouldered the wounded lad to the shore where General Lawton, himself, strode down to receive deliverer and delivered with a word of praise.

"You're a brave fellow, my friend," he said. "What's your regiment?"

The private saluted.

"The 46th Infantry, General," he said. "But I'm in this scrimmage on volunteer service."

And still he stood at salute.

"I have to report, General," he said, "that Edward Pevear, your volunteer aid, captured a Filipino battery unarmed, routed the gun squad and killed the major commanding—one of our deserters, sir."

"Good riddance to all such," replied the general. "But I reckon you helped Ned a bit, eh, Private? Is the boy badly hurt?"

"Just winged a bit, General, I think," said Maskin. "I want to get him to the hospital."

"There's a Red Cross ambulance over yonder," said the general. "See that the boy is carried at once to the hospital at Paranaque, and report to me. I'll ship him back to Manila as soon as he can be moved. Do you need a stretcher?"

"I'm good enough one for that distance, sir," replied Maskin, striding toward the ambulance with Ned in his arms. "But General," he said turning an instant, "don't forget, please, that Ned captured that battery, and it was no Quaker gun this time."

"I shan't forget it—or you either," replied the general with a nod.

And he did not.

Young bones knit quickly when young blood is healthy; and Ned's broken shoulder was in such condition that, after two days in the field hospital at Paranaque, the boy was transported to Manila and there he convalesced through half the rainy season that forced the American army into inactivity.

Cavité province was cleared of insurgents by Lawton's vigilant measures; but the ever vanishing Filipino "army" could not be captured; it was simply scattered, until once again it massed in force, only again and again to be "cleared out."

"They're worse than eels for slipperyness," said the general. "If they'd only stand up in the open we'd soon bring 'em to terms. But this style of fighting is

exasperating; why, if we're going to pacify these islands we'll have to leave a garrison in every town we take; and that means an army here of a hundred thousand men."

And time has shown the truth of the great Indian fighter's assertion.

During the enforced idleness of the rainy season, General Lawton kept an eye on Ned Pevear; and Colonel Sinclair helped the boy to recovery. In a month Ned was about; in two months he was as good as new; but the colonel insisted on his taking it easy, and placed him beyond the temptations and laziness of camp life and the mess table, in the house of an honest, home-keeping Dutch merchant of Manila, who, as the agent of a Holland house in the islands, found something to occupy the time and attention of the boy.

Ned chafed somewhat in this commercial atmosphere, and longed for field operations to begin again; but both Mynheer and Goodevrouw Verbeckhoeven kept him well in hand, thanks to Colonel Sinclair's appeal, until Ned grew to like them and their ample, cleanly and home-like home. For the purpose of ease in communication and to occupy time—and the rainy months provided plenty of time to be occupied—Ned set about learning Dutch from the rosy-faced yungvrouw, Wilhelmina, the daughter of the

Verbeckhoeven home. Ned was always a lad to improve his time, and the yungvrouw Wilhelmina was by no means a teacher to be objected to.

The general, too, interested himself in the lad, and Ned, more than once, was a guest at the big house on the Calle St. Rouque, where the great room with its massive, gold-framed mirrors, its walls hung with handsome draperies, its polished floors set out with carved furniture and tinted foliage plants seemed almost out of keeping, save in its size, to the quiet homelike tastes of the honest, modest, simple-minded, great-hearted man, who, like so many of the world's heroes, had to die to be appreciated by his fellow countrymen.

"But don't you think the fuss is about over, General?" Ned queried.

"Over? I don't know, lad," the general replied; "I'm not really sure whether the insurrection is over or just begun. You see I don't take any stock, Ned, in this organized resistance business. The Filipinos never can organize; but they'll resist a long time; that's their way. Why, we broke up the insurrection at San Isidro last spring; but I can't see that we can call it over if it needs seventy thousand men to preserve peace. The Filipinos haven't surrendered yet."

"And will not, my dear General," said the "reclaimed" Filipino leader, Artachio, chief of Ilokos

and rival of Aguinaldo, "until you have secured the head and front of the conspirators—Emilio Aguinaldo. His death is the only solution."

"That's not the American way, chief," the general replied. "We wish to reclaim your people and not to revenge ourselves. A dead Aguinaldo would not be so great a feather in our caps as a contented and friendly Aguinaldo."

"That he can never be, good sir," Artachio replied. "He is a bad man, cold and cruel at heart, and cares for nothing but the accomplishment of his own ambition. Why, General, he ordered me shot because I stood in his path; but my brothers of Ilokos shielded me and I was forced to be a fugitive and an exile. For a year I was dogged from convent to convent, with but a penny's worth of rice for food and sometimes not even a fish a day. Aguinaldo, himself, sought to starve me into submission to his will and many times did I have to defend myself from a treacherous thrust in the back. Only your brilliant expedition into the north, my dear general, permitted me to breathe free air again, and liberated me from the foul dungeon into which the tyrant had thrown me. May none of you ever get into his clutches, O friends, for he is as relentless as he is irreclaimable."

Ned laughed to himself.

"Get into Aggy's clutches, eh?" he mused.

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"Not here, I reckon. It's his game to keep out of our clutches. I'd like to face him a minute or two, though, and give him a piece of my mind."

He had occasion to remember that wish later; for strange things were in store for Ned Pevear, of which, fortunately, he had no foreknowledge.

But he said aloud, "I do hope, General, you will get Colonel Sinclair to let me go out with you on your next Aguinaldo hunt. He thinks I'm too risky."

"Haven't I said so, too, Ned," the general said with a laugh. "Capturing batteries single handed and hunting down plots with nobody but a lanky and equally foolhardy private to help you! I'm afraid Colonel Sinclair is right."

"I follow my leader, sir," Ned said significantly.

"Perhaps," nodded the general. "But you never catch me doing any of this single handed business. Fact is, my dear," he said turning to his dearly loved wife, "I'm the soul of caution, eh Major?"

Major Starr laughed.

"Caution, General!" he exclaimed. "You know what the boys of the staff call you—the cavalry screen."

"Oh well! some one must be at the front, you know, and I like to see what's going on," said the general. "But I hope that Ned has learned wis-

dom. Why, he's grown so circumspect under the guidance of that good Dutchman he's living with that I shan't be at all surprised if he has 'cold feet' when it comes to chasing Aguinaldo again, and perhaps back out altogether, eh, Ned?"

"Back out, sir!" exclaimed Ned. "Never; or not until they make you a brigadier of regulars and retire you."

"You have heard nothing of that appointment yet, General, have you?" Major Starr inquired.

"Not a word," the general replied, with just a shade of disappointment in his voice—for Lawton was ambitious, as are all brave soldiers, to be recognized by his country for faithful and meritorious service. "I hope it will come, though, before retiring age; I'd like to be a brigadier of regulars while I am in the field. But I don't believe they'll make me one now. Of course, if the president believes I deserve the advance, he'll give it to me; otherwise, he'll let some other fellow have it. You see, I'm a soldier and not a politician, and I suppose I don't know just how to please the folks in Washington. I do know that the president has confidence in me; but I reckon they've got me cowed, Major. I'm afraid to talk for fear of saying the wrong thing and I believe I'm more in dread of these newspaper men than I am of Aguinaldo and all his insurgents."

"Which is not at all, sir," Ned declared, proud of his general's bravery.

"You wouldn't be satisfied to be out of service, you know, General," the major said. "Why, when this business here is settled and done for, I shouldn't be at all surprised to hear that you'd applied for leave of absence to see service in the big scrimmage England's getting into down in the Transvaal."

"Take me with you, if you go, won't you General?" cried Ned. "I'd like to see that row."

"It's going to be a tough one, mark my word," said Lawton. "I believe you're right, Starr," he added, his eye brightening as he looked toward his wife. "I think I will go down and have a look at that South African business when I get through here. They know how to fight there, and that's what I like, you know."

His wife shook her head decidedly.

"No, you won't, sir," she said with a smile. "When you're through here, you're going home with me to raise oranges in Southern California; that is good enough for us; and I know it will be better for you than South Africa."

The big fighting hero looked down tenderly on the little woman who was so much to him. He nodded approvingly.

"Yes, that's good enough for us," he said simply. And, after the Filipino had left, he began to talk over

with his chief of staff the wisdom of the new campaign in the north which he was urging upon General Otis, and in which, so Ned declared, he was bound to go along with "his general."

But the home plan for orange growing in Southern California never was to have the brave Lawton's attention. Here again it was wise, indeed, that it is not given to man to foreknow the future. The rice paddies of San Mateo were to be Lawton's harvest field of glory, even before the tidings of his much desired advance to brigadier-general of regulars had come across the seas to him, from his appreciative "superiors" in Washington. The tireless Indian fighter, the foremost general in the Philippines, lives to-day only in the memory of his countrymen. But that appreciation has gone beyond anything he ever dreamed or hoped for, and the green slopes of sacred Arlington cover the ashes of a recognized and enshrined hero—Lawton, the knight of "an honored name and a stainless sword."

This, however, was to be all of that yet unknown future when, to Ned Pevear, in the home of the good Dutchman Verbeckhoeven came the news, as the rainy season closed, that Lawton was ordered north. The boy lost no time in deciding in his impulsive way that he was going to be counted in also for that new campaign.

By special pleading with Colonel Sinclair, and by

virtue of an open application to General Lawton, he was at last given his will and was detailed once more as volunteer aid to the general commanding when Lawton and his three thousand fighting men gathered in the shadow of Mount Arayat for the autumn campaign in Central Luzon, the chief object of which was the capture of Tarlac, Aguinaldo's fourth and fluctuating capital.

Seventy-three miles to the north of Manila, between the Rio Grande and the sea, and beyond the great swamp region of Candaba lay Tarlac with its ten thousand inhabitants, defended, so came the report from Filipino refugees, by a force of twelve thousand men under Aguinaldo, himself, with an advance force of five thousand more at Bamban, twenty miles to the south.

Against this force Lawton pushed forward, in the changeable days of a Philippine October, with three thousand troopers—the black infantrymen of the Twenty-fourth, cavalry mounted and dismounted, Tagalog "friendlies," Macabebe scouts, two armored launches and a tug with a trail of hooded cascoes, and flat-bottomed ferry scows for use on the Rio Grande, and a train of mule wagons and carabao carts for transportation on land.

It proved a hard but successful campaign. Again did nature ally herself with the Filipinos to delay and defeat the plan of the expedition; but to no

avail; for Lawton never turned back. Downpour of rain, slippery, clogging mud, roads that were sloughs and holes, and roads that were rivers and marsh, broken bridges, cut telegraph lines, hunger from delays in transportation, and nakedness from the wear and tear of clothes,—these all were features of this remarkable campaign that must be reckoned with, in the summing up; and yet in spite of all, the movement of Lawton to the north was an irresistible advance. Before the "forward march!" of this indomitable Indian fighter who always went unarmed and never knew fear, the loudly-heralded "invincible forces" of Aguinaldo melted into flight and never came into contact with the American invaders save as the advance guard of Lawton was forever pressing upon the vanishing heels of the rear guard of Aguinaldo. Steadily on to the north—through Arayat and Angeles and San Isidro to Bamban and Magalong they marched until, at last, Colonel Bell's troopers rode into Tarlac without firing a shot and Aguinaldo and his men were flying for safety into the mountain fastnesses of North Luzon around the town of Bayambang, sixty miles away.

At Angeles came Ned's golden opportunity. Great trenches barred the advance; blue cotton uniforms were many and active. Even as Lawton rode on in the van, trouble commenced. There came a flash from the ambuscade; two troopers reeled in

their saddles; but still the flag streamed from the hand of the color bearer.

"Don't waver, lads! Charge 'em! Rush the bush! one jump and they'll run," the general shouted.

Straight against the unseen foe, the great black troopers of the Twenty-fourth, the infantrymen of the Forty-sixth, with the wide sweep of scouts, and the mountain battery galloping for position, thundered Lawton's advance. There was a scrambling in the trenches and the chaparral; a scattering of swarming insurgents flying for dear life from that vantage ground of death; but, even in the break-up, the plucky little brown men of the trenches gave a farewell shot and Ned with horror saw the color bearer sway in his saddle while the staff dropped from his hand.

With a cry, "the flag! the flag!" Ned spurred his pony abreast the wounded color bearer and grabbed at the standard as it fell.

Pling! spat! came the crackle of the Mausers from the bush and Ned felt the staff split and break even as he shook it aloft. He dropped his reins and with his free hand clutched again at the falling standard. His fingers were enveloped in its drooping folds, the banner trailed only so far as his saddle bow; then, flinging away the useless part of the staff, his hand closed about the short upper half, and lifting him-

self in his stirrups he waved the rescued banner about his head and rang out the loud American "hurrah!"

It had all happened as in a flash; but the boy's swerve and dash for the flag had placed him almost in the van of the charging troopers; the next instant the horses broke through the frail fibre shelters above the Filipino trenches and emptying their rifles into the retreating insurgents, the Americans swept the field clear from San Fernando to San Isidro, and the twice captured town fell again into their victorious hands.

But Ned felt that the greatest victory of all was the saving of the colors, even though, like a modest youth, he made no reference to it. Others, however, held equally favorable opinions; and when hot, dirty, dishevelled and triumphant the victorious advance rode once more into captured San Isidro, General Lawton touched his helmet to Ned Pevear.

"I salute the saver of the colors," he said. "Ned, that was great work. You can be trusted, I see, never to let the flag trail in the dust, so long as you have brain and heart and hand equally quick and ready."

Then the men cheered, and for a brief season, "Major Mascot" was the hero of the day.

Meantime Wheaton's allied expedition of twenty-five hundred men had come up the coast from

Manila in a fleet of two transports, two coasting steamers and three war vessels to effect a junction with Lawton at Dagupan on Lingayan gulf, where the one railway line of Luzon comes through jungle and marsh and over valley and plain and mountain ridge from its starting point at Manila, a hundred miles to the south.

This movement, too, succeeded, and, encircled as in a great net, the insurgents in their new capital of Bayambang would have been bagged and tied up, had not their tactics of "run while you have the chance" enabled them to crawl through the meshes of the American net while it was tangled in marsh and morass, in broken road and blind mountain trail.

There was, however, but one result to every battle, and a Filipino fight was always a Filipino rout, even though the gallant Logan fell in the charge on San Fabian, and the brave Quartermaster Howard fell at his post of duty while trying to force supplies to Lawton's starving troops by boat around the great bend of the Rio Chico.

As the quartermaster fell, pierced by Filipino bullets, and his civilian clerk staggered back shot through the shoulder, Ned Pevear, who had been dispatched by Lawton with a message to the troops at Tarlac, jumped for the rapid-fire gun and catching a terrified Filipino by the collar just as he was mak-

ing for the hold of the tin-clad gunboat, fairly drove him to the wheel which the other Filipino "assistant" had deserted.

The dying quartermaster raised his head and hand in a last appeal.

"Keep her going, Ned, whatever you do!" he commanded, and then fell back, dead.

Ping, plung! the charge in the rapid-fire gun raked the high bank and higher bush where the insurgents lay cleverly ambushed; back from the shore came a relentless fusillade. The steersman at the wheel fell shot through the back, and as Ned tried to force another charge into his gun it jammed. Coolly enough he took off the feed cases, pulled out the cartridges with a hand ejector, and reloading the gun by hand, gradually elevated it so that, firing through the canvas awning, he could reach the enemy ambushed on the river bank above him.

"Keep her going, Neddie; I'll back you up," cried Maskin, who had been detailed for escort duty and was with the boy on the boat. "I've got the Filipinos straightened out in the engine room feeding the fire, and I've tied another to the wheel where he's got to steer right 'cause I'm keeping my eye on him; but I can do that and fire at the grass yonder—that's where the beggars are."

The bend of the Chico was rounded now, and the consort tug with its trail of cascoes came into sight.

Out of the smothering hoods, one of which had, as you know, well nigh brought Ned to grief, crawled the soldiers "like rats in a trap" while the lieutenant's revolving cannon on the tug poured fire into the bank.

"Let's rush 'em now," cried Maskin.

"Got to stay by the ship," returned Ned, fussing with his disordered rapid-fire gun.

At that moment the wheelman threw up his hands, shot through the head; the wheel, its tension relaxed, whirled swiftly around, and, before Ned or Maskin could signal the Filipino engineer to back water, the launch with one last vigorous spurt plumped stolidly into the mud.

Another volley came from the grass. From the tug and cascoes up the stream came an answering report, but the soldiers dared not fire in the direction of the stranded craft for fear of wounding friends.

"It's getting too hot here, Maskin," cried Ned, as the bullets pattered on the deck and kicked up the water about the launch. "I'm going to swim for it. The shore is safest and those boys in the cascoes will be with us in a minute. Then we can charge on the ambush."

"All right, all right," shouted Maskin. "I'm after you," and, an instant later, both were swimming for the shore.

Out from the hold of the stranded boat the Fili-

pino engine crew came in a frantic rush and, as hastily, sprang overboard and headed for the shore.

Ned and Maskin touched bottom and were soon sheltered from the ambuscade by the high bank above them.

"Hullo!" cried Ned. "Here comes the crew. Amigos, aren't they? Say, Maskin, why can't we make them charge that ambush with us and drive the Gugus into a trap where our boys can bag 'em?"

"Might if they're any good," replied Ned's comrade. "I don't take much stock in amigos, but we've got to do something, if we want to save our bacon, and get the boat off. Hullo, lads, are you good Americans?" he demanded, standing at the water's edge and confronting the Filipino crew as they came wading ashore.

"*Si, si, senor, viva Americanos!*" they replied, with a ready unanimity, instigated by the sight of Maskin's levelled pistol.

"I thought ye'd be. Out knives! out bolos! and follow us. Yell for all you're worth, Neddie; and you lads, just you let out one good A 1 American yell, if you know how!" was Maskin's final command.

Up the bank with a chorus of yells that might have curdled the most valiant Filipino blood with terror dashed the charge of "Major Mascot" and his valiant five.

At the sound, the Filipino firing line rose from the

screen of grass and prepared to run; over the water from the tug and its cascoes came the boom of the revolving cannon and the roar of the Krag volleys mingled with the chorus of the attacking soldiers in answer to the yell of the charge.

"Surrender!" shouted Ned, springing with levelled pistol straight at the wavering line on the bank.

"Surrender, you blooming idiots!" echoed Maskin, a good second to the boy. "Now, let 'em have it, Neddie," he cried, "and you Filipino Americans! show what you're made of!"

The flanked firing line turned in flight; suddenly they wheeled about and covered the charge with their rifles.

"Fire! fire! why don't you fire, Neddie," cried Maskin.

"Pardon, gentlemen; it is of no use," came a voice in Spanish just behind them.

Ned and his comrade wheeled about in surprise. Their Filipino crew had vanished, and in their place a file of insurgents in red and blue, with an officer in the lead, stood with their rifles trained upon the two American soldiers.

Maskin looked from the line in front to the line behind.

"Flanked! by the Jumping Jupiter!" he cried. "Neddie, we're between the devil and the deep sea; so this nigger takes to the woods. Come along!"

And, without an instant's hesitation, the big private, with a flying leap, sprang over the high bank. But when Ned would have followed him, a storm of bullets raked the bank from that direction and the "flanking file" closed about him completely.

"At last you are my prisoner, sir," said the leader of the insurgent file. "Come; the president shall settle with you. He owes you much for repeated cruelties to one of his military family."

And as Ned handed over his now useless revolver, he recognized his captor. It was his old friend of the cascoe and the congress hall—the Filipino major on Aguinaldo's staff.

CHAPTER IX

"HELD BY THE ENEMY"

CAMPAIGNING either wears out or hardens up a man—both mentally and physically. Two lessons Ned Pevear had learned from experience: to take things as they come, and never to "squeal."

"Well, Major, I guess it's your turn now," he said in his most courteous Spanish. "*Como estamos de salud?*"

The Filipino major grinned with satisfaction.

"How's my health, do you ask?" he said, repeating Ned's half humorous query. "Better than yours will be, my fine friend, when Don Emilio sees you. He has a special reception for an American brigand who violates the sanctity of an envoy. Come, it grows warm here, and your friends on the river are more anxious to see you than am I to have them do so. I greatly desire your honorable society. Fall in! march," he cried to his men, with a sharp command in Tagalog.

There was nothing else to do and Ned "fell in" between his guard of four Filipinos, while the major rode ahead to hasten forward the rear-guard, which

had thus made its stand at the great bend of the Chico, to the main but fast vanishing Filipino army.

"I wonder if Maskin is all right?" the boy asked himself. "That was a long leap he took. But he generally comes around right side up. I wish I had tried it, too."

But it was now too late to regret, and Ned had to "hike" forward, no longer a volunteer or even a free agent—in the hands of the enemy.

By a wide detour, to avoid captured Tarlac, across marsh and river, through hill passes and along secret by-paths known only to the natives, the Filipino rear-guard cleverly evaded the American advance. After three days of this roundabout travel, Aguinaldo's temporary capital was reached, and Ned Pevear, prisoner, entered the town of Bayambang.

The Filipino major and ex-envoy had treated his young prisoner decently enough; that, Ned himself was compelled to confess. Until they had swung away from the American advance lines at Tarlac, Ned had been a close prisoner, but when they skirted the lake-side and passed through the towns of San Juan and Cuyapo, the rigors of captivity were relaxed and Ned, if he only knew where the American lines lay, or where he would "be at" if he did get away, saw two or three good chances to escape his guard, who, he declared, all seemed to sleep at the same time and keep awake at the same time. But

he concluded that the risks of captivity were less than those of escape, and he went along an apparently willing prisoner.

His captors even allowed him the use of a mule over part of the road to imprisonment; but when a town or village was reached Ned was forced to dismount and walk as a captive at the heels of the Filipino pony which carried the victorious major.

"I'm the captive of his bow and spear," Ned assured himself, "and I suppose he's going to work me as a triumph for all I'm worth. All right! go ahead, old fellow. I'm a bigger man than you are, anyhow! You don't have many captured Americans to show off. You want to make the most of me."

So, when Ned passed through the gaping villages as part of the major's "triumph," he braced up so noticeably and towered above the little brown men of his guard so perceptibly, smiling and bowing to the throng that lined the streets and otherwise conducting himself with the air of a conqueror, that even his captor, the major, was puzzled and tried to fathom the meaning of the boy's apparent good nature.

"My young friend seems in excellent spirits," said the major, as they concluded one of their "triumphs" in a little nipa hamlet beyond San Juan. "Is it that he thinks that the cross upon which Don

Emilio will crucify him in the palace square of Bayambang will be so restful a couch for the American?"

"Major," replied Ned, "if that cross is set up in Bayambang it will not be for me, sir. General Lawton will be hot-footed after the brown boys who kidnapped his aid; I think honors will be about evenly divided when you and I ride into Bayambang."

"*Magnifico!*" cried the Filipino. "You bear up nobly, young sir. But comfort not yourself thus. The General Lawton will never reach Bayambang. He can never force our hill defences. Be wise in time, O friend. Sir, I scatter thus my animosity to you to the four winds"—and the major lightly blew away his finger tips. "I make to you the magnificent offer, which I know my president, Don Emilio, will sanction. Join us. The Filipino republic will yet be invincibly triumphant; and we need trained gentlemen like you to help us achieve greatness. I can promise you a captain's rank in our army; it will be for you speedily to make yourself general. And then—behold the future!"

"Major," said the boy indignantly, "I don't think you understand me. I'm not built the way you imagine. My father fought for the flag of our country and his son will never desert it or turn traitor to it. You can bring on your cross if you wish to,

but you'll find me game. Don't ever speak to me again like this."

The Filipino shrugged his shoulders.

"As you will," he said; "other of you Americans have talked in that way before; and now, see, my friend, we have ten—twelve—more of your soldiers who are officers in the Filipino army."

"Traitors!" cried Ned. "I spit upon them all—renegades, cowards and sneaks that they are. When the end comes here in your islands the crosses you would build for us will be all too much honor for such as they. We will simply let them rot under our contempt—men without a country, soldiers without a flag. Why, Major, even you despise them; you know you do."

Again the major shrugged his shoulders.

"*Quien sabe!*" he said. "*Escepto el cautiverio es el mayor mal que puede venir á la hombres!*" *

"*Si, senor,*" replied Ned instantly, "*y por la honra, se puede y debe aventurar la vida.*" †

After that, the major made no attempt to entice or urge desertion upon Ned Pevear; and when at last, they entered the town of Bayambang and the prisoner was delivered to the keeping of the prison guard at the town hall, or "civil palace," the major

* "Who knows!" he said. "But—captivity is the greatest evil that can fall on men."

† "Yes, sir," replied Ned instantly, "and for honor, one may and ought to venture his life."

simply said to the lad, "My friend, I now go to report your capture and arrival to Don Emilio Aguinaldo, president of the republic. Thereafter, he will deal with you, and I shall be avenged upon the adventurer who, too often, has crossed my path."

"Sir," replied Ned, "I thank you for your courtesy and I despise your threat. An American knows how to care for himself. I am but one boy; but if I fall a hundred thousand Americans will be here to pay you for assassinating an unarmed prisoner. We have but one word for such things at home—murder."

And turning on his heel Ned Pevear passed into the filthy quarters that served as the prison for the captured Spanish and Americans at Bayambang.

But he gave a shout when, among the prisoners in the assembly hall, the first who came forward to greet him was Maskin, the inevitable.

"Hello! Neddie," he cried, advancing with extended hands. "I'm here a little ahead of schedule time, but I thought I'd be on hand to greet you, either as advance or rear-guard."

"Maskin!" was all Ned could say at first. "How did you get here?"

"Too tired to stay outside, Neddie," he replied. "Got to have some place to rest, and this is about as good a hotel as these brown beggars know enough to give you."

"But I thought—" began Ned; then he broke out, "I don't believe you, Maskin. You old fraud, you just got yourself captured to look out for me!"

The tears welled over in the lad's eyes as he fairly hugged his comrade.

An odd look came into the soldier's face and he flung an arm around the boy's neck.

"Next to home and mother, Neddie," he said, "you'll fill the bill. So, as I could not get to them, I just had to go for you. And here I am."

"But how did you do it, Maskin?" demanded Ned. "I thought you jumped over the bank in safety."

"But *you* didn't," replied the straggler, "and I knew I should be dead tired and stupid without you. So I tagged behind."

"And touched goal first," said Ned, still clinging to his big friend. "How was that?"

"Well, you see I lost you somewhere off in the lake region," Maskin replied; "so I just followed Lawton's tactics of going to a place if you're going to go, and struck along the railroad track instead of swinging around as you did; but when I ran into an outpost of the brown fellows,—why! it was all up with me. They thought I was an American deserter, like Andrews at the bridge, and they welcomed me with amigo palaver to beat the band."

"And what did you tell them?" asked Ned, remembering his own experience.

"I told 'em they weren't offering enough for the risk," the soldier replied. "Why, Neddie, their ideas are as small as they are. What are thirty *pesos* a month, for a captain's pay? Why, it's less than half what Uncle Sam pays me for hiking with a Krag as a private. 'Thank you, gentlemen; you'll have to raise your price,' I said. And here I am, only sort of a half prisoner, waiting to see Mr. Aguinaldo raise his ante."

"Maskin," cried Ned, dropping his arm from his comrade's neck, and looking at him, in half indignant query. "You don't mean that you—"

"I mean, Neddie, that you're a bit of a fool," replied Maskin quietly. "Don't you know that I'm here to help you, and that all's fair in love and war? I'm here for both. Say, Neddie, do you remember what I did to that deserter Andrews of the Forty-sixth whom we killed at the bridge?"

"You kicked him out of your way as if you despised him for a renegade," said Ned. "And now—"

"And now," drawled Maskin, "I'm kicking just the same, only in my own way. Wait till I get Mister Aguinaldo's offer. You don't know me yet, Neddie."

Ned was to know him better, soon. For, before the day was done a file of soldiers came to conduct Ned into the presence of the president; but as they did so, Maskin fell in, too.

The lieutenant in command would have ordered him out; but in his most direct and vivacious Spanish, Maskin declared that he had an appointment with the president and he proposed to keep it—then. So impressed was the little lieutenant with the big soldier's assurance, that he simply waved his hands in protest, and let Maskin fall in beside the younger prisoner.

And thus were Ned Pevear and Private Maskin ushered into the presence of Aguinaldo.

The "palace of the president" was a confiscated convent. The prisoners and their escort passed through the strong infantry guard, which, armed with Remingtons, was drawn up on duty at the high-arched gateway. The password was given, and with the guard at the gate calling after them, as a jeering good-by, the only American words the Filipinos knew: "one—two—three—four—*hep!*" (the drill order of the "rookies" or new recruits) Ned and Maskin walked up the stone steps and down the stone corridor and into the room where sat the president, Don Emilio Aguinaldo, dictator and chief of the insurgent Filipinos.

A young man of thirty, only a little above the

Filipino five feet of stature, sat at a desk, piled high with books and papers. His dress was a fatigue coat and trousers of drab silk; his "pompadour hair" was stiff and black; his dark, pock-marked face had a Chinese tinge that showed his mixed blood, and the lower lip protruded slightly from his square set jaw. But his words were slow and almost civil as he looked up and, returning the lieutenant's salute, greeted the prisoners. About him were a few officers in khaki uniform while his body guard of two soldiers, in German cap and holding ancient halberds, stood like bronze statues behind his chair.

"More Americans?" he said in Spanish. "And which is the valiant one who attacked the person of my envoy in Malolos and robbed him beyond the lines at San Isidro?"

He looked at the major of his staff who stood among his officers as if bidding him identify the prisoner; but Ned gave the Filipino no chance to speak.

"I'm the one, sir," the boy announced unhesitatingly. "And what I did was strictly within the rules of war."

"Perhaps so, young sir, if such be the American rules of war," said Aguinaldo. "But the Filipino republic acts under more civilized methods. With us the person of an envoy is sacred and free from the indignity you put upon my officer—and for

which, sir, you shall be made to pay dearly. You die at sunset."

"Permit me, your excellency," it was Maskin who spoke; "pray deal with me first, for my affair allows no delay. I am here under agreement with one of your officers to arrange the terms upon which I am to enter your army as drill-master, and I am waiting for your offer."

"Ah! it is the big American soldier who came into our lines, is it not?" the president said. "And why not the captain's pay of thirty *pesos* silver, sir?"

"That is the price of treachery, sir—thirty pieces of silver," Maskin replied significantly. "Am I not to be held better than Judas the Jew, Excellency?"

Aguinaldo smiled.

"You hold yourself highly, sir," he replied.

"As you did, sir, when you sold out to Spain for a round million—and then failed to deliver the goods," said Maskin boldly.

The dark face of the little Filipino dictator flushed a mahogany hue with anger; his brows knitted menacingly.

"*Carramba! Castila!*" he said with low tones, through his teeth. "Do you know who I am?"

"Assuredly," replied Maskin coolly, "or I should not have spoken as I did. You had your price; I have mine. Will you pay it?"

The wily Filipino sat silent for a moment. Then

he said, "Well, sir, and what is your price? For what will you give us the pleasure of your so valuable services?"

"The life of my friend, the boy here, who is worth more than all the Filipinos that ever bargained," said Maskin. "Send him back through your lines, under safe conduct to American headquarters, and I will stay behind and drill your magnificent mestizos into condition to be licked in good shape—and not to run as they do now whenever they hear the American bugle or catch a glimpse of the stars and stripes."

"His freedom!" Aguinaldo rose to his feet in surprise, while the Filipino officers pressed forward eagerly, and even the major of the staff could make no word of protest. "His life for yours? and nothing else?"

"What more do I want?" said Maskin. "If he goes free, I don't care a *peso* what becomes of me."

"You shall not do it, Maskin!" cried Ned, finding his voice. "My life shall be the price of no man's honor. I'll show these Gugus how we Americans can die."

"Will you shut up, Neddie, and let me run this thing?" said Maskin. "I know what I'm doing." Then he turned to Aguinaldo. "Your answer, Excellency," he demanded in Spanish.

"The Americans are as brothers together," said

the Filipino chief, his smile embracing both "comrades" in its apparent courtesy. "Why would they not be as brothers to the Filipinos?"

"They will, sir, if you will give them the chance," Ned declared, not reading the wily leader's smile aright, and thinking he had a chance for missionary work. "Our flag is the promise of protection and freedom to all who stand beneath it. There is not an American soldier or officer in your islands, there is not an American at home from the president down who is not willing and anxious to be as brothers to you and your people, sir, if you will but acknowledge the supremacy of the American government in these islands and let us join hands with you in making them united, peaceful and prosperous."

"Bah! it is the old story," said Aguinaldo. "There is and can be but one ruling power in these islands—ourselves! The Filipino republic will fight for independence until every American on the soil is killed, driven out, or converted. I propose to convert you both, my friends, into good Filipinos. Join us, and we can make you great; continue our foemen and you shall learn the fate of all foes of the Filipino republic."

"Your answer, Excellency," again Maskin demanded. "My services for this boy's life. What do you say?"

The major on Aguinaldo's staff sprang from the group of Filipino officers.

"Under favor, your Excellency," he said, addressing Aguinaldo. "I press for instant punishment on both these persons. The tall fellow's offer is a ruse. Trust him not. I know him now. This is he who with the boy prisoner I have brought you, attacked me in the Congress hall at Malolos. I arraign them both as enemies to the Filipino republic. This deserter is no deserter. He seeks but to cajole and then betray you. Bid me crucify them both. They deserve it. The Katapunin has decreed their fate, and to the laws of our great Brotherhood even you, President, must bow."

"Patience, my brother," Aguinaldo replied. "I will deal with these men. They are American robbers taken in crime. I cannot accept your offer," he declared turning to Maskin. "You would use it only to betray my mercy; you would help us only to desert our standard as you have played turncoat to your own. I must have both of you or neither. If you will both join the forces of the Filipino republic and swear allegiance to it, serving in our army as captains, duly commissioned, I will grant your lives. Do you, young sir, promise this?" he demanded of Ned.

"Never, sir," the boy replied, "I will not desert my colors for all the commissions in the Fili-

pino army. I am aid to General Lawton, and I demand the protection due a prisoner of war."

"Pardon me, sir, you are an assassin and spy, as has well been proven," Aguinaldo replied. "The rules of war do not count against treacherous invaders who call us rebels and break every promise made. I do not recognize your office or respect your flag. You die at sunset. Take him away."

"Touch him at your peril!" cried Maskin, springing to his friend's side. "If you neither recognize his rank or respect his flag, you shall respect mine. In the name of the power and might of Great Britain I demand of you, Aguinaldo, the Filipino chief, protection and safe conduct for my friend and myself. You dare not touch us under the folds of this flag. We are Englishmen!"

And, before the startled eyes of Aguinaldo and his officers, while even Ned Pevear was speechless with surprise, Maskin tore from his belt a miniature English flag, and flinging one arm about his friend, held aloft the emblem of British power, in defiance and defence.

CHAPTER X

A BREAK FOR FREEDOM

It would be hard to say which was the most surprised at Maskin's astounding move—the Filipinos or Ned Pevear. But Ned was the first to act.

He drew away from his would-be protector in indignant denial.

"It is not so!" he cried—in English first, and then swiftly putting his protest into Spanish. "I am no Englishman. I am an American!"

"Do not listen to him, gentlemen," said Maskin. "He had no notice in this matter. The affair is mine. I claim respect and protection for a British subject under the flag of England. Dare you deny me that protection?"

The Filipino is still a child in many things. Three such things he respects—courage, display and force. All three of these lived in Maskin's defiance and demand, and, for an instant, no one attempted to reply. Then Aguinaldo spoke.

"Is this another ruse on your part, Mr. Deserter?" he said. "Beware! I am not to be trifled with."

"No more am I, Excellency," Maskin replied. "I stand upon my rights as a subject of her gracious majesty, Victoria, Queen of England and Empress of India. Do you refuse to recognize her flag?"

"Not her, but you do I refuse to recognize," was the president's reply. "You are an American soldier; how can you be a British subject?"

"That is my affair; I can explain it to your Excellency—in private— if need be," Maskin replied. "But I think there is no such need. I am not here to argue over international rights. I demand my own as a British subject, and protection for this lad —my friend. Beware how you peril your republic by complications with the British Empire."

Aguinaldo hesitated. Shrewd and wily though he was, he was still as ignorant as any brother Tagal about outside nations. If this man really were a British subject his detention or punishment might involve the Filipinos in a dispute with the British government, and in the event of a possible break-up of his so-called republic, Aguinaldo desired to have the sympathy of the world. But as to the boy—

"Admitting you are right—which I do not—" he said to Maskin, "how can it extend to this lad who acknowledges himself to be an American and our enemy?"

"Admitting you are right—which I do not—" the big soldier replied, echoing the Filipino's words

—"I simply say this to your Excellency: When the war between Spain and the United States broke out American interests in Spanish ports and capitals were placed in British hands. This flag protected them where the American flag could not. This is a similar case. I demand your recognition of my rights under the law of nations; and, under the law of neutrality, I demand immunity for this boy, now under protection of the British flag. Beware, sir! You refuse these rights at your peril."

There was really too much talk of law in all this for *el presidente*. The man might be right. He talked with significant assurance. If he were right, Filipino revenge must go slow. Aguinaldo decided that he must refer the question to his Minister of Justice and legal adviser before he decided.

"Judgment is reserved on these cases," he said at length. "Let the men be separately confined until we investigate this matter. The Filipino Republic stands for impartial justice, and it shall not be said that the president of the republic acts without patient consideration of the rights of all."

"Pardon, Excellency," said Maskin. "The boy must stay with me. I refer you to the action of Great Britain against Portugal; you can see the Admiralty Reports for 1895 for the law on this matter. By that decision of the Tribunal of Arbitration it was settled that, in all disputed cases of

neutrality or international interests, the property or person under consideration must remain in custody of the national representative who, for the time being, had charge of the assumed belligerent. This lad, the assumed belligerent, is in my charge, as the representative of Great Britain, to whom under the law of nations the affairs of the United States were delegated. Do you doubt the law? I refer you again to the Admiralty reports."

More law and admiralty talk! It would never do for the president of the Filipino republic to display his ignorance in such matters.

"As you say!" he decided; "take the prisoners—"

"We are no prisoners, Excellency," persisted Maskin. "I am here of my free will; you detain me at your peril! The Filipino republic is not at war with England."

"Our guests, then," said Aguinaldo with the enforced courtesy of the fox. "Give them temporary quarters in the offices next to the cavalry barracks. I will decide the matter to-morrow."

But there was too much of the Spanish *manana* in this action to suit the fiery young major of the staff.

"I protest, *Senor Presidente!*" he cried. "Not to-morrow, now, now! What have the laws of na-

tions to do here? I claim a guilty one under the laws of our Brotherhood—the glorious Katapunin, whose secrets they have violated, whose banner they have disgraced."

"And I tell you, Excellency," cried Maskin, "that if you mix up any of your Kalathumpian nonsense with grave and ticklish questions of neutral and international rights, it will be farewell forever to the Filipino republic. Out of the sternest justice the nations will combine against you in defence of the principles to which they have most sacredly agreed and squeeze the life out of you, even as a sponge is squeezed dry of water, and all else of value."

The law of nations—that vast and high sounding phrase—again quite overpowered the Filipino president, whose ambitions and desires were all toward a world-recognition of his own ability and power.

"My decision is final," he said. "Escort the pris—the guests of the republic to their quarters;" and, encircled by guards, Ned and Maskin were marched away to the cavalry barracks.

"Whew!" said the big soldier, as the door of the "office" closed upon the reprieved suspect and prisoner, "that's the hardest job I've tackled in a dog's age. It's worse than hiking through the jungle. Just press the button for fans and something cool and restful, Neddie. I'm dead tired."

Not a word had Ned Pevear spoken since his single, indignant protest in Aguinaldo's office. Now he broke out.

"I believe you'd make a joke of everything, Maskin," he said. "But I won't have it! I'm no Englishman, nor the tool of Englishmen. I fight under my own flag. I'm American and I'll stay American; and, if they'll only let me out here I'll go straight back to Aguinaldo and say—

"I know," drawled Maskin, "you'll say, please kill me, kind Mr. Aguinaldo. I'm not particular whether you crucify me or burn me, or try some nice novel Chinese sort of death on me. Only please kill me 'cause I'm an American—and that's what we came here for."

In spite of himself Ned began to laugh.

"You are an old fraud, Maskin," he began. "Why, you'd —no, no! I don't want 'em to kill me. There's lots I want to see and do in the world; and Maskin, dear old fellow, it was you—you who saved my life. You've done it three times now. Why did you?" and with a quivering lip the boy held out his hands in thankfulness and affection.

Maskin met him more than half way. His eyes, too, were moist and his face flushed with pleasure and sympathy.

"Why consarn your picter," he said, trying on his most exaggerated Yankee twang, "why

shouldn't I 'a dun it, bub? H'aint we Yankee sojers and h'aint we "—here he changed suddenly into cultured English—" what did I do it for, Neddie? Why, lad, I love you, that's why—and I can show you where it says in the Bible, 'Greater love hath no man than this: that he lay down his life for his friend;' you're my friend,—and that's why."

For a moment no word was spoken; but these two, boy and man, who had been thrown into such strange companionship under a far-off oriental sky, stood in their prison quarters, hand in hand, looking straight into each other's eyes.

Ned was first to break the spell; he never could stay serious or repressed long.

"I always said you were an old fraud, Maskin," he cried with a nervous high-keyed laugh; "and now you've proved it. Why, you never let on to me you knew more than a word of Spanish—and you talked it off there like a Madrid professor; and what do you mean by that English dodge? Are you really a Britisher?"

"Hi cawn't deny me birthright, me lud," replied Maskin, exaggerating his cockneyism as he had his yankeeism. "H'im a loil subject of 'er majesty the queen, Gawd bless 'er! It's no use, Neddie," he went on, "that's the truth, and there's no disguising it—Merrie England is home and the queen is mother."

Ned looked at his friend in puzzled perplexity.

"You don't mean to say that you are—" he began.

Maskin laughed heartily.

"A royal prince with a real queen for my mother? O! Neddie, you'll be the death of me! I thought it was Englishmen who couldn't see through a joke! But you—no, no, lad, I'm only the youngest son of an English gentleman, with more education than income, adrift in the world as are so many more of my kind. How did I come to be in the American army? Just drifted there, like other Englishmen and Germans. Why lad, I went through Rugby school and did two years at Oxford. Then the governor's cash gave out and I was too lazy to go to work. So I drifted to sea. Went to South Africa and was mixed up in that blessed Jameson raid which had promised to make all our fortunes—and didn't. In fact it broke most of us, me especially. Then things went rocky with me. I shipped before the mast; got stranded at Samoa; nearly starved to death 'on the beach' at Apia; drilled Mataafa's dusky boys at Malie when those rival kings were kicking up trouble; was sergeant of marines for the Japs in the Yulu fight; got tired and wanted to see home and mother, but instead worked my way to New York as cook's mate, on a dirty tramp steamer. Got stranded in New York without money or friends. If you've

got 'em both in New York, all right; if you haven't either of 'em, God help you! Got down to my last shilling; up comes this Filipino squabble; I volunteered and here I am. Naturalized? Bless you, no. Uncle Sam wasn't looking too sharp after trademark citizens then; he wanted seasoned soldiers. I said I was the son of poor but honest English parents—out in South Dakota, I believe. And like the stranger I was, they took me in. Great old life I've had, Neddie; but I never took the queen's shilling and became a Tommy Atkins; so I've never deserted my colors, you see, nor played games with my nationality."

"Excepting now, Maskin," said Ned, intensely interested in the story of his friend's roving life, and visibly impressed by his education and culture. "Didn't you kind of play it on that Gugu president just now with your talk of protection and laws of nations? What about these Admiralty reports and all that?"

"Bluff, Neddie, just British bluff!" whispered Maskin. "But I know these Gugus. They back right down before a bold stand and a show of authority, and as I didn't believe that Aguinaldo had the Admiralty reports in his library, I fell right back on them for evidence. And I've found, too, in my knocking about, that when you get into a tight place —especially in this blooming part of the world—

the only safe and convenient nationality to base a bluff on is that of a British subject."

"Perhaps so, until the United States gets full power here; but I will not go back on my nationality, Maskin," Ned declared stoutly. "I am an American and nothing else!"

"Who's asking you to be anything else, you blessed young idiot?" said Maskin. "I'm not. All I say to you is, keep still a bit and trust things to me. These Gugus don't rise readily to the true meaning of a British bluff."

"And you think you can work us both out of this, do you?" queried Ned.

"I think I can try," Maskin replied, "and if—hello! What's all that rumpus about? They're turning out the guard. There goes the cavalry call! and now they seem to be beating to quarters. Ten to one, Neddie, Lawton's up to 'em. We may be happy yet."

There was noise in the streets; there was excitement in the capital; and now, past the cavalry barracks, came a dash of pony riders with a great trail of frightened natives, wailing women and terrified children.

"*Americanos! Americanos!*" was all the prisoners could make out from the babel of shouts. But it was enough; the boys in blue and khaki were surely "rushing" Bayambang.

"Don't you stir, Neddie," said Maskin. "We'll just refuse to hike, see! We'll stay here till the boys come in, unless the Gugus fairly carry us off in their arms—and we'd be a load, you and I."

The test came speedily. Before a half hour had passed, they saw Aguinaldo's official carriage, piled high with papers and luggage, dash through the town with outriders and guards; then the door opened and a Filipino major—not Ned's major, but a less vindictive and assertive one—with a file of blue-cotton brown men bade the prisoners come out.

"For what reason?" demanded Maskin.

"The president requests it," the Filipino replied. "He has determined to remove his capital further to the north, and he begs the presence of the Englishman for important consultation."

"The Englishman stays here," Maskin replied. "Bayambang is friendly enough to us just now."

"It's the president's orders, sir," said the major.

"We've hiked our last hike, me boy," said Maskin. "If you want us you'll have to carry us. I'm not traveling on foot."

"The *carrameta* detailed for your use is at the door?" the Filipino replied.

"And my friend?" demanded Maskin.

"I have no orders for him," the major answered. "Others have him in charge."

"Then here we stay," said Maskin. "Neddie, roll up your sleeves; we'll have to chase 'em out."

Before the threatening attitude of the big soldier and the sturdy boy, the little Filipinos quailed an instant. Up the street rolled the swift tide of retreat; the Americans might at any moment be in the town. But the major must obey orders.

"O friend!" he cried, half in perplexity and half in appeal; it is my orders; you must come with me. Resist and I must take you."

"You'll find me a load, me boy," cried Maskin with a laugh. "What do you say about it, Neddie?"

Already the boy, with doubled fists and arms in "scientific" position, had ranged alongside his friend.

"United we stand, divided we fall, Maskin," he cried. "Say when, and I'll sail in."

"They are getting ready to shoot, Neddie; but they're too rattled to shoot straight. They don't want to kill us yet, and they won't linger around if Lawton is so near. If they fire, duck, and then go for 'em when I say Now!"

In despair the little major cried: "Come with me or I shoot."

"Don't give 'em a chance, Maskin," said Ned. "I'll make a break with you now."

"All right!" returned Maskin; "see me try some ventriloquism on 'em. When I yell in the

rear, you yell your best in front and make a dash for the wagon."

There came a shout from Maskin's deftly changed voice that, to the frightened Filipinos, sounded like a charge in the rear.

"Surrender Gugus! Hit her up, boys!" came the command, apparently from behind them.

Ned responded to the ventriloquist's trick with the ever ready American yell, and with that, both prisoners, dashing upon the perturbed and mystified group, struck out from the shoulder, right and left.

Now if there is any one thing that the Filipino is afraid of it is the white man's fist. The brown man is not skilled in "the manly art of self defence."

This way and that they scattered, staggering under the swiftness and fierceness of the attack. Some dropping their guns raced down the street, believing the American army was really at their heels, while the little major could only frantically wave his sword and keep out of the way of Maskin's swift revolving fists.

Ned picked up a dropped rifle and clubbed it as he ran; Maskin wrested a bolo from one of the bravest who stood at bay and lifting the little brown man in his arms fairly flung him at the major.

They took a flying leap into the *carrameta* and tumbled out the terrified driver. Then Ned seized

the reins and whirled the wagon about, while Maskin plied the whip on the restless ponies.

"Whoop—ee! for liberty!" he shouted. "Ta-ta! Major! My regards to Aggy. Watch out for Lawton."

And down the street and into the highway that stretched away from Bayambang, in quite the opposite direction from that taken by the vanishing president of the Filipino republic, dashed the swaying, swinging, bumping *carrameta* in the mad break for liberty.

CHAPTER XI

"OUT OF THE FRYING PAN INTO THE FIRE"

FREEDOM is dear to all. As Ned observed, as they cleared the town of Bayambang, "Whoop it up, Maskin! Liberty is a priceless boon."

But the road to liberty is often strewed with thorns; and an unfamiliar Filipino highway, in a hostile country, with night dropping down, seems an especially thorny road.

"Are we going right?" queried Ned, anxiously, as he peered into the gloom ahead.

"Give it up, lad," his friend replied. "We must be, though. This is the highway and our boys must be close at hand."

But the rout that had swept past their prison and cleared the town so quickly of soldiers and officials seemed to have stopped altogether as they dashed out of the gate. The shouting and bell ringing grew less and less distinct as they drew farther away from Bayambang and only a few stragglers and belated fugitives on foot or on carabao back drifted past them, too intent on escape to hail or question them.

Suddenly, in the road ahead, came a sharp challenge in unmistakable Tagal-Spanish.

"Halt! who goes there?"

"Commissioners to the American general," answered Maskin without a moment's hesitation.

"From the president?"

"From the general, Don Emilio Aguinaldo," Maskin relied.

"Your passports?"

"Hit her up, Neddie! Don't stop," muttered Maskin. "Under orders; no passports!" he shouted to the picket guard.

The *carrameta* dashed on, but two soldiers clung to the galloping ponies, until they slowed down.

"Your passport, or the password?" demanded the officer.

"Have a care how you detain us, sir; we are in haste," said Maskin. "It is the president's private business. Are not the Americans at hand?"

"At hand? No, miles away," replied the officers.

"But the president has evacuated Bayambang," said Maskin. "Whence came the rumor of the American onset?"

"It is false," replied the commander of the outpost. "We have seen nothing but a stampede of mules and carabaos. Could that upset a republic?"

"So it seems, friend," said Maskin. "But I must do my duty. Let us pass, we ride on business with the American general."

But the picket guard was insistent.

"Your right to pass,—show that, and we will speed you," he said. "The American is yet miles away. Your papers, brother."

"We're in for it, Neddie. Jump when I do and keep close after me," said Maskin. "Ah! our authority? You question it?" he demanded. "Come nearer, friend. I will show you our authority."

The officer of the patrol thrust his head into the *carrameta,* while a sentry held a swinging light aloft. The next instant a sounding blow had sent both light and officer "to grass," and Maskin leaped from the *carrameta,* fairly dragging Ned after him.

"Keep together, Neddie; and just hoof it for all you're worth," he cried.

They "hoofed it," valiantly, darting, dodging, leaping, eluding, now stumbling to earth, now up and off again in swinging leaps, while through the dark came shouts and cries mingling with the bark of wildly discharged Mausers.

Jumping over paddy dikes, crashing through bamboo thickets, clambering over rocks and climbing the hills that ramparted the valley, the fugitives ran or "hiked" through that night of flight, until as dawn broke upon them they found their way stopped

by the broad, swift current of the Agno and, really dead tired this time, flung themselves down for a rest and a council of war.

"I don't know where in blazes we are, Neddie," said Maskin; "but we're here and we are going to stop a bit. Jupiter! I feel as if I'd traveled about 'steen thousand miles and my feet are as big as hams. If we'd kept it up much longer I'm thinking we'd grown hoofs."

The good natured grumbling of the Englishman —always a privileged grumbler—kept up the American boy's spirits which had drooped a bit during their final spurt to the river. But a campaign in the Philippines when men are not drooping with homesickness or weakening with disease, hardens youthfulness into phenomenal endurance; and youth and endurance Ned Pevear and his friend certainly possessed.

"I feel hungry as a hawk in a chicken yard," Ned declared. "Got anything to eat, Maskin?"

"'Only three grains of corn, mother,
Only three grains of corn,'"

sang Maskin, "or rather a last hunk of cold boiled rice, that I swiped out of that *carrameta.* Have a bite?"

"It's always rice in this country," said Ned, deliberately chewing the small piece Maskin doled out

to him. "May be I wouldn't like a ration of army coffee, bread and beef, just now. You couldn't please me better at the Waldorf-Astoria."

"Well, you won't overeat on this ration, Neddie, I'll allow," Maskin remarked. "But it's better'n bananas and black sugar. One of the Thirteenth boys wouldn't eat anything but that in the prison at Bayambang. We buried him the morning you came in. Rice is the safest standby in Filipino land."

"But what next? I don't want to stay a rice-eater in Filipino land if Lawton and army rations are ahead, do you?" queried Ned.

"Not much I don't; but are they ahead?" said Maskin. "I think we're going away from Lawton instead of going towards him. Do you notice how the river runs—pretty near due north, and Lawton's advance is due south."

"Jucks!" exclaimed Ned, "we just headed the wrong way, did we?"

"So it seems. I wasn't studying a compass though, Neddie," replied Maskin. "Well, north or south this river's got to be crossed, followed or left. Lie low, Neddie! there comes a canoe."

Down the Agno, self-impelled by the current, floated a Filipino canoe, steered by two little brown men.

"Only two of them. Can't we manage 'em, Maskin?" suggested Ned.

"Perhaps, if we can only get 'em to land here," the Englishman answered; "but how; we've got nothing but our hands?"

"Well, they served us well at Bayambang," said Ned, "and—O, say! I know a trick. How far are they from the shore?"

He was already stripping off his travel-worn clothes.

"Why, twenty feet or so—perhaps a little more;" said Maskin, measuring the distance; "they're hugging the shore closer'n I thought they were. If I only had a gun—why hello! Neddie, what are you up to?" for Ned stood naked before him.

"Just my morning bath," the boy said. "Say, Maskin! you lie low in the bushes close by the water. I'll slip in and swim under the water till I can grapple the canoe; then I'll just shove it ashore —and you can do the rest, eh?"

"It's our one chance; but I don't want you to risk it, Neddie. Let me—" but the Englishman got no further in his protest. Already the lithe, sinewy form of the American boy had dropped into the river behind the screen of tree and bush and had disappeared from view.

"Pray heaven there are no 'gators in this stream," said Maskin, as behind his leafy ambuscade, he watched the river eagerly for the boy's reappearance. But scarcely by bubble or ripple was the boy's pres-

THE DEMONS OF THE RIVER.

"Wow!" yelled the other demon, and forthwith sprang at the agitated canoe.

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ence indicated. Once again he was attempting his great "under water act."

Leisurely the canoe floated with the slow shore current; the Filipinos appeared to be in no hurry. But the next instant they were roused from their labor of leisure and looked at each other in amazement. Their canoe had suddenly and for no apparent reason altered its course and was being rapidly propelled, head on, to the bushes that fringed the river bank.

"*El caiman!*" shouted one of the boatmen and, with uplifted paddle, sprang to the end of the canoe —as that must be called whence the propelling force came.

But no cruel snout nor scaley head of alligator or crocodile rose to the surface as the paddler looked anxiously into the water.

He bent far over, and, even as he did so, out from the river rose a glistening boyish head.

"Wow!" cried Ned, as with a shriek of terror, the Filipino dropped his paddle at the sight of this unexpected water demon.

A big—it seemed to the other Filipino, as he sought in vain to stay the canoe—almost a gigantic form rose from the bushes.

"Wow!" yelled the other demon and, forthwith sprang full at the agitated canoe.

The terrified occupants of the canoe, despairing of their lives, at once leaped overboard. Maskin, catch-

ing the deserted craft, stepped quickly aboard, while Ned, clambering in at the other end, well nigh tipped over the frail canoe and almost spilled Maskin into the river.

"Go easy, Neddie, too much here to waste. Here's a Mauser, ammunition, a bolo, bananas and rice. Skip ashore and grab your clothes while I stand off these Gugus. You've done nobly, boy!"

Ned needed no second advice. He sprang ashore, bundled his clothes aboard and was speedily embarked again, while Maskin with a paddle in one hand, kept the canoe afloat and, with the other steadied the threatening rifle.

The dispossessed Filipinos were swimming wildly for shore.

"*Americanos! Americanos!*" they shouted. So fierce and peculiar an attack upon them could only come, they knew, from the always startling and ever terrible American soldier.

"Off you go, Maskin!" cried Ned. "Let me get some clothes on and then we'll say good-by to our friends."

"Clothes can wait, Neddie. This is no dress rehearsal," said Maskin, plying the paddle. "You grab hold of this Mauser and let 'em have it if they try to turn us down."

But the Filipinos in the river had no desire to grapple with or loiter among these American water

demons. Instead, they headed straight for the shore and with one last look at the vanishing canoe, disappeared in the brush.

"*Labor omnia vincit!*" cried Maskin, "which being interpreted, my son, meaneth—"

"Good-by to the Filipinos! Maskin," broke in Ned. "Do you think I didn't go to school, too? Tolman against Rugby, every time."

The Englishman laughed good naturedly.

"Free translations are the best guides to liberty," he said; but I'm not sure as it is 'good-by' to the Filipinos, Neddie. The woods may be full of them. We've got to watch out for them."

"Well, since you're slinging Latin, old man," said Ned, struggling into a portion of his discarded clothing, "my advice just now is something I remember at school, too—something about mediums—what was it? Oh yes: *In medio tutissimus ibis;* which means it's always safest in the middle. Let's go down in mid-stream."

"Neddie, you're a brick," cried Maskin with a laugh. "It's fun being in scrapes with you along. I'd like to know where this thing will bring up though."

"Why, in the sea, I suppose, if we live long enough. Don't you believe Wheaton's column is up this way somewhere?" Ned queried.

"Give it up, Neddie. We'll hope so," Maskin

replied. "Anyhow, with this Mauser and bolo, I don't intend to be nabbed by the Gugus again!"

"Here either," Ned declared. "I've hiked it enough over these mountains and marshes and I reckon I've got your complaint, old man,—I'm just aching to see home and mother—meaning, this time, American lines and General Lawton at their head. My, though! won't a blue shirt and khaki look good to us?"

With the day before them the fifteen or twenty miles down the Agno to the sea did not take long; for both were expert paddlers and they were going with the current.

Frequent towns and villages were passed; but the voyagers were not disturbed; for, when the passage became dangerous, Maskin would stretch himself on the bottom of the canoe, well out of sight, while Ned, crouching as he paddled, so as to approach as nearly as possible to the Filipino five foot stature, "played the 'sawed-off' pretty well," so Maskin declared; and thus they ran the gauntlet to the sea.

But when the sea was reached, what then? Neither Ned or Maskin had anything to offer.

"We'll build our bridges when we need 'em," Maskin observed; but Ned could see that he kept up a good thinking.

The river broadened; a stretch of blue water lay ahead; the stream broke into a delta and beyond the

triple mouths on one of which the fugitives could make out the low roofs and cathedral towers of a large town, lay the wide waters of the great Lingayen Gulf.

They did not know it though; they had no idea of their whereabouts nor could they know that only a few miles to the north was the railway terminal of Dagupan, the rendezvous of the American transport and war ships of Wheaton's supporting expedition.

What they wished to do was to avoid the town, and keeping out of sight, find or force the information that would soonest bring them to the American lines. So they paddled the canoe into one of the narrow mouths of the delta that cut through the sedgy marshes to the west of the town and hoped, under the screen of tall grasses, to float silently to the sea.

Suddenly around a bend in the river mouth they saw just ahead of them on the left bank a low-lying fisherman's village, the only sign of life between them and the broad gulf beyond. And lying at the river bank so near that they knew they could not avoid it, there swung at her moorings, one of those odd sailing crafts of the Malayan coasts which Maskin knew all too well. Long and narrow, with lee side flat, and yellow lateen sails, with its cigar-shaped log to keep it steady, and with no recognized differ-

ence in cut of bow or stern, no wonder it made the English adventurer stop his paddling and lift a warning finger to the boy behind him.

"What is it, Maskin," Ned queried.

"Something worse than Aguinaldo and all his Filipinos, Neddie," the Englishman replied. "It's the swiftest craft afloat, a low-down, sneaking, murderous, beastly boat—the flying proa of the Malay pirates."

"Let's jump ashore and hide," said Ned.

"From what, lad; from snakes that crawl in the grass and beasts with eyes all over their heads—that's what these Malays are," said Maskin. "You might as well try to dodge the Empire State Express. I'd rather fight the whole Filipino army."

"Well, we'll die game, then," Ned declared boldly. "Give me the bolo and you take the Mauser. I'll let 'em have the cavalry stroke the colonel showed me."

"Dear lad," said Maskin, regret and anxiety in his voice, "Fighting is no good, here. There's a boatload of 'em heading straight for us. We'll paddle for the proa like lightning and try some more bluff on 'em."

The paddles fairly dug into the water under their vigorous strokes, and before the Malay boat could head them off, the proa was reached and Maskin and Ned climbed over its low side and stood on its

narrow deck. It seemed like walking deliberately into the tiger's open jaws.

A swarm of Malays confronted the intruders; the crowd in the long canoe came swiftly alongside and added themselves to their comrades on the proa.

Maskin made them a sweeping bow.

"Gentlemen," he said in a lingo that Ned could not understand—the jumbled "Pidgeon English" of the Malayan coast; "we come from the American general. He wishes your services in a river expedition up the coast where his high draught vessels cannot go, and where cascoes are not swift enough."

A half-breed of villainous countenance, seemingly in command of the proa, came forward.

"The American?" he said in Spanish which even Ned could understand, "and what will he pay us, valiant sir?"

"The American never pays low, noble commander," replied Maskin. "I can promise you good terms if you will come with me and confer with the general."

A new voice broke into the conversation; a little brown man before whom even Maskin weakened and Ned felt himself turn pale.

"The noble commander regrets, sir, that he cannot at this time talk of terms with you and your general," said the new comer. "Whatever terms are

to be considered shall be with me. I have commissioned this gallant ship to speed me to Hong Kong, for there our Junta is collecting vast stores of arms to sweep you and your general into the sea, where you and this assassin boy shall precede him, whether you will or no. Have them bound tightly, good captain, until we are out of sight of their hateful warships. They are American spies and assassins, foes to the Filipino republic and condemned to death by the president, Aguinaldo. Bind them fast and then sail at once. Those are your orders."

The speaker was the major of Aguinaldo's staff, evidently despatched on Filipino war business to Hong Kong. Even Ned's belief in good luck weakened a bit in the face of this new disaster.

Securely bound and gagged the prisoners were placed against the mast from which already swung in the breeze the broad lateen sails; the moorings were cast off, the proa moved away and catching the breeze at the river's mouth shot with a great leap into the open waters of the broad Lingayen Gulf.

And as she did so, Maskin suddenly leaned against Ned's shoulder and with a directing look in his eyes led Ned's gaze eastward.

There, not three miles away, off toward the port of Dagupan, two gray warships swung at their moorings and, from the stern of each, fluttered the

stars and stripes. It was the unkindest cut of all. For once in his life Ned almost cried from disappointment.

But Maskin only smiled. "So near and yet so far," he said.

CHAPTER XII

ADRIFT ON THE CHINA SEA

THE proa made rapid time, borne on its course by the favoring breeze. When well out at sea, heading across open water for Hong Kong, the gags were removed from the prisoners' mouths; their bonds were loosened, and they were brought into the narrow standing room where the Filipino major and the Malay captain seemed to be in conference as to the "justice" to be meted out to their prisoners.

There was evidently a difference in opinion as to the day of justice, though there seemed to be no question as to the certainty of it. The Malay captain, it was apparent, wanted the business settled at once.

"Dead men tell no tales," he said, "and if, as you say, the big fellow claims English protection and the boy is an aid to the American general the sooner they are removed the better. If the American consul at Hong Kong, or the English governor there should hear of my business with the president, Aguinaldo, there would be no more trade in your islands for me. I have a most admirable headsman;

he swings the bolo with true skill, and with the Japanese sword he is a master. So, holo! Marquis—we call him the marquis, Major, because his name is Ito; come hither with your big sword. Here is joy for you."

The Japanese headsman came at the call of his chief. As he did so, Ned felt Maskin suddenly grip his arm; but not a muscle of the big Englishman's features seemed to move. The Japanese regarded the prisoners steadily; his lids drooped perceptibly as he surveyed Maskin with half closed eyes, but, beyond that, Ned noticed nothing.

The Malay captain addressed the Japanese in a language "all Greek" to Ned. The headsman nodded and replied in the same unintelligible tongue. Then he laid his big sword aside and stepping up to Maskin deliberately turned back the collar of his shirt and felt his neck professionally and significantly. But, even as he did so, Ned could have sworn that some whispered word of recognition passed between the two.

The headsman turned to the captain, and, taking up his great sword again "made a few remarks," evidently bearing upon the case in hand.

"Your pardon, Captain," said Maskin in Spanish; "but it would be a satisfaction if we might be enlightened as to the decision of your friend with the big sword—the marquis, I believe you call him.

We who are about to die salute you, and beg for information."

"The American is always a cool one," the Malay captain replied. "My friend, the Marquis, says that the American neck is tough, but he promises for my friend, the major, a swift and thorough piece of work, whenever he is ready."

"Thanks," said the imperturbable Englishman, "and what says our dear friend, the major?"

The Filipino major evidently disapproved of hasty action.

"For the big Englishman, if he be English, I care little. You may deal with him as you please; but the American boy I reserve till I can exhibit him to the Junta at Hong Kong, and attend to him in the presence of my brothers of the Katipunan Society."

"My friend, the American boy, is no doubt honored by your consideration, Major," said Maskin; "but, as you know, we stand or fall together. I, too, claim the judgment of your brothers of the Katipunan. It was I—not my friend here, who stole your dirty rag at Malolos."

"Ha, vile *Castilia!* It was you, was it?" cried the major. "Captain, I claim them both. By virtue of your contract with the president, Aguinaldo, I have a right to deal with all matters on your proa. These are my prisoners. I claim them both."

"As you please, Major; they are yours," the Ma-

lay assented. "But beware of the American consul and the English governor. You may fall into trouble at Hong Kong."

"The risk is mine," said the major. "I do not think that I will permit the pleasure of my just vengeance to be taken from me by too speedy and gentle a punishment to these despoilers of the banner of our Brotherhood. Let them be kept under close watch until we are within the jurisdiction of the Junta."

A word and a sign to the Japanese headsman, and Ned and Maskin were again securely bound and thrust within the bamboo cage, which Ned supposed was to be considered as "the brig" of the proa.

But as he fastened the door upon the prisoners, a few whispered words passed between Maskin and the executioner. Then, with his great sword, the Japanese lounged near them on watch.

"What does it all mean, Maskin?" queried Ned. "Something's up. What is it? Who's your friend?"

"Be quiet and say nothing, Neddie," returned Maskin in his half whisper. "I've got the bulge on our friend, the major, I think. The marquis was in the company of marines that I was sergeant of in the Yulu fight, and he thinks a lot of me. Say nothing; but do as I tell you. While there's life there's hope."

Night fell at last; the motley crew of the proa, man by man, save the watch, the lookout and helmsman, stretched themselves in sleep; the marquis, who had been off duty for a few hours, relieved the Malay guard at the prisoner's cage, where Ned dozed in the sleepy serenity of boyhood, but Maskin kept eye and ear alert.

Suddenly, the Englishman touched the lad's shoulder and then clapped a hand over his mouth to prevent any exclamation or query. The door of the bamboo cage opened softly; strand by strand the coir yarn, salt-soaked into ferocious toughness, fell, cut away from the arms and legs of Maskin; another instant, and the sharp bolo had done the same service for Ned's bonds, and, in stocking feet, the released prisoners slipped out from the bamboo "brig."

"Boat 'longside, sergeant; gun, food, compass in;" Ned caught the words in low whisper. "Go quiet; goo-by!"

"But you, Ito; what about you?" queried Maskin.

"Ito alright," replied the Japanese in his imperfect English. "Sergeant my fren'; I resk it. 'Sides, Malay cap'n no like Filipino. Ito let 'em fight it out."

The next instant Maskin had dropped into the boat alongside, while Ito steadied it.

"Tumble in, Neddie," he said.

But Ned's attention was elsewhere. A low, crouching form was creeping through the gloom along the flat lee side of the proa; a hand, screening the eyes, seemed trying to make out what was happening in the dark. In an instant Ned knew the alarm would be given.

The creeping form pressed to the side and peered over the rail, where Maskin's boat swung in the river. With a leap Ned was upon the spying figure, and smothering the cry of warning even before it could be uttered he flung himself and his prize over the low rail of the proa and dropped into the sea beneath.

Ito saw the move.

"Boy and spy overboard. Catch at him and get 'way 'fore proa wake up."

Maskin made a grab at the entangled forms as they rose to the surface, and with his mighty muscles strained to their utmost fairly hauled them both into the boat.

"Which is which, Neddie?" Maskin whispered.

"Here I am, Maskin; I've got his mouth covered yet," replied Ned excitedly. "Good gracious! he don't move. 'Spose he's dead?"

"Can't say! Chuck him over," Maskin whispered. "Here, let me get hold of him. We've got to hustle."

"No, no!" Ned cried, almost aloud. "I can't drown a stunned man. It's murder."

"It's murder if you keep him," said Maskin. "Hello! what's that? They're up on the proa. To the oars, Neddie! Pull, pull for dear life, lad; we'll both catch toko if they get us again."

The stunned spy lay quiet in the boat, and the two fugitives pulling at the oars with all their toughened sinew and muscle fairly made the boat fly through the waters of the China sea. Cries and shouts came from the proa, where the aroused crew was evidently being misled into bewilderment by the shrewd Japanese executioner, for the noise died slowly down the wind.

Then, at last, Maskin feeling about in the dark, discovered the available mast, which he quickly shipped in place; next he shook out the big triangular sail, and, bidding Ned stop his rowing, crawled down beside the boy in the stern of the boat, held a practiced hand on sheet and tiller, and, scudding before the wind, was speedily flying for liberty, afloat on the China sea.

"Now, then, Neddie; we're all snug and comfortable," he said; "bear a hand with your friend who came with you, and give him a quick passage to Davy Jones."

"What! throw him overboard?" cried Ned. "I can't, Maskin. Perhaps he's dead."

"Well, then he's no fit companion for two such live chaps as us," said Maskin. "See if he is; but chuck him over anyhow."

Ned dropped beside the senseless form in the bottom of the boat. He laid a hand upon the heart; he laid a cheek against the parted lips.

"He breathes and his heart beats, Maskin," Ned reported. "He's alive, all right. What can I do to bring him to?"

"Bring him to?" repeated Maskin; "why, you mustn't. Throw him overboard, I tell you, or it will be worse for both of us."

"No, no; don't tell me to do that, Maskin," cried Ned. "It would be murder to throw over a defenceless man. Thank heaven, I haven't gone so far. Let him come to and we'll fight it out like men. But I'm no assassin."

"Hm! Mean to say I am, I suppose," Maskin muttered. "I know what this means better than you do, Neddie. Here we are, at sea, in a small boat, with only a starving ration of rice and water; land nowhere near; ships, no one knows where; three people adrift. Do you know what that means, Neddie? You will after a few days of ugly sun, failing food, no water and no help. You'd wish you'd stuck by the proa and fought for your life on a full stomach. And now you want to add number three to the party—a spy, an assassin, a treacherous

Malay foeman. It's death to him or to us; we can't have any sham sentimentalism about this thing, Neddie; here's a case where two's a company and three's a crowd, with a vengeance.

"Well, wait until he comes to, anyhow, Maskin," pleaded Ned. "I can't kill him or see him killed in cold blood. Every fellow ought to have a chance for his life, you know. Besides I want to have a look at him."

"All right; I always do give in to you, like a big fool, Neddie," said Maskin. "Have your own way; but I'm telling you we'll be sorry for it."

And then for a time the subject dropped.

"The dawn came up like thunder," as Kipling describes the swift and sudden Malayan sunrise, and, borne by the favoring breeze, the little boat, which they now saw to be the dingy or gig of some English merchantsman, "swiped by the thieving Malays," so Maskin declared, had fairly hurled itself ahead during the night and, when morning broke, no sight of their prison ship, the proa, could be seen.

But Maskin gave a shout of surprise as, far astern, when he rose to sweep the horizon and get his bearings, he caught the smudge of smoke that marked an ocean steamer, coming nearer to them in what seemed to be directly in their course.

"There's safety in sight I do believe, lad," he cried. "No enemy of ours can be cruising around

in an ocean steamer—whether she's liner or tramp. No Malays or Filipinos in that craft, I'll wager; so I say let's lay to here or keep right in her course and signal for relief."

Ned fully assented, and steering upon what seemed to be the steamer's direct course, they furled their sail and with Maskin's shirt fluttering at half-mast as a signal for help, they kept their oars out and held their boat in line with the now plainly visible steamer.

But even as he strained his eyes for the lookout, Ned felt a stir in the boat and recalling their third passenger, stooped and turned him over in order to see his face.

As he did so he gave a shout that drew Maskin's attention from the approaching steamer.

"What's the matter, Neddie; another steamer?" he demanded. "The woods must be full of them."

"No, no," cried Ned, pointing to the reviving figure in the boat; "see here; who do you suppose he is?"

"Not—by the Jumping Jupiter! it is. Well; here's a jolly go!" cried Maskin.

The third passenger in the little boat was the major on Aguinaldo's staff.

"So! he was the spy, was he? Great grief! but that was a close call, Maskin?" Ned cried, looking down into the blinking eyes of the major.

But Maskin said never a word. The startle of

recognition had swerved their boat from the course, and he labored to swing it again in line with the approaching steamer.

Then, taking a quick turn about the tiller to hold the boat steady he rose deliberately and stooped as if to gather up the half-conscious Filipino.

"Well, good-by, Major," he said, "we're sorry to be deprived of your company, but really you're in the way here you see; so here goes!"

He swung the little Filipino aloft; but Ned darted in between.

"I can't, I can't bear it, Maskin," he cried. "It's dead wrong I tell you to treat a man that way. Let him live; he can't harm us."

"Come, Neddie; get out of the way. I've given in to you too much, I'm thinking," said Maskin. "This little snake in the grass has bothered us long enough. I don't propose to let him spoil our pudding now, just when we're ready to—hello! she's signalling; answer her—no—here let me—" and dropping the Filipino into Ned's grip instead of overboard as he intended, Maskin sprang to the mast and, tearing away the shirt he had tied there, swung it furiously above his head.

"You keep quiet, Major, if you value your life," whispered Ned in Spanish to the Filipino. "I've saved your bacon three times already, but I don't

know how much longer I can keep Mr. Maskin's hands off. He does not really love you."

"Out oars, Neddie! she's got us all right," cried Maskin, joyfully, springing back to his tiller again. "We'll bring up alongside. Row for all you're worth. I'll steer."

Five minutes brought the steamer in hail. She was a long, low-cut, dirty-looking tramp and freighter, and over her stern drooped a flag of blue and white, emblazoned with shield and crown.

"Portugee!" exclaimed Maskin examining the flag. "We're all right, Neddie. She's a Portuguese tramp or merchant steamer, bound south. Let's hail her in a minute. Spanish will do."

Over the water came the hail from the steamer. Maskin replied.

"In the boat there! What's wrong?"

"Shipwrecked Americans! Can you help us?"

"Pull alongside and we'll throw out the ladder. Are you too weak to climb?"

"Thank you, kind sir; we are in good strength," replied Maskin.

But Ned said, "I don't know about the major, Maskin. He's got a bad bruise on the head and seems to be pretty weak."

"Hang the Gugu! I forgot all about him," muttered Maskin, as he steered alongside the slowly

moving steamer. "Well, we can't settle him now. We've got to take him aboard."

"Of course we have and you know you're not sorry, Maskin," said Ned. "Don't you worry about him. I'll help him up. Come brace up, Major; here's our rescue."

"My friend, the American, I owe you my life," the Filipino said, looking into the boy's eyes gratefully, as Ned passed an arm under him to help him up.

"O, that's all right, Major. Everything comes round all right in time, you see," said Ned, thankful over their deliverance. Maskin's brief picture of what it meant to be adrift in an open boat in the China Sea had made him welcome this swift and unexpected good fortune.

The Portuguese steamer had now slowed down almost to a standstill; Maskin caught the flung rope deftly; the ladder dangled down the side and two sailors, dropping into the chains, steadied it, as Maskin bumped alongside.

"You go up first, Maskin," said Ned. "I'll follow with the Filipino."

"Not much; my sea legs are surer than yours, Neddie," the Englishman replied. "You look out for Number One; I can shoulder the major. If we've got him, we've got him. Swarm up, lad."

"Don't make a mistake and drop him, Maskin,"

Ned said with a nervous laugh. "I promised him his life, you see."

"I'd like to break your head for a blooming idiot, Ned Pevear," muttered Maskin with a grumble that was half good-natured. "But, if I can't, you can be sure I won't break my word. Swarm up the ropes, lad. I've got the major safe."

Ned clambered up the swaying ladder and speedily stood on the steamer's deck; after him came Maskin with the wounded Filipino in his sturdy arms.

A chorus of inquiries in Portuguese and Spanish greeted the rescued castaways.

"American soldiers set adrift by Malays," Maskin explained. "We owe our lives to you, sir," he said, with a salute to the swarthy officer on deck. "Pray, sir, what ship is this that has picked us up, and whither bound?"

"The *Dom Sancho* of Oporto; from Nagasaki with merchandise to Lourenzo Marquez," was the reply.

"Whew! Lourenzo Marquez? Why, that's leagues away," exclaimed Maskin. "Down in South Africa, is it not?"

"Yes, on Delagoa Bay, Portuguese East Africa," the officer replied.

"Going to stop midway, so that you can put us off?" Maskin inquired.

"Stop, sir? No, no," the Portuguese replied.

"You'll have to sail there with us, if you seek safety on the *Dom Sancho*. Our cargo is in haste."

"That settles it, Neddie," Maskin said, turning to his friend. "We're in for it now. We're bound all the way to Africa, and hanged if I don't believe we've blundered into a supply ship for the fighting Boers. Lourenzo Marquez is the only port for Pretoria. By the Jumping Jupiter! we do have the most astonishing luck. Say, boy, I'm American again, see! It's not a healthy climate for Britishers around Pretoria just now. So, hey for Lourenzo Marquez and another peck of trouble!"

CHAPTER XIII

IN A NEUTRAL PORT

ANOTHER peck of trouble? Ned could scarcely see how that could be. The United States had no row with Englishman, Portuguese or Boer. So this latest deliverance seemed to him a most timely and excellent one, though he did have a shock of disappointment as he thought how far away he was drifting from General Lawton, Colonel Sinclair and the campaign in Luzon.

But youth is full of hope. A big steamer was a safer home than a little boat in mid-ocean.

"Something may happen to get us back to Manila," he said. "Anyhow, here we are, so let's make the best of it."

And this he proceeded to do at once, with words of great thankfulness to the officers of the *Dom Sancho,* and an explanation of just who and what they were.

"Our government will recognize your courtesy, sir," he said to the captain. "My comrade here is Private Maskin, detached for special escort service; I am Edward Pevear, aid to the American General

Lawton of the Luzon expedition, and this is Major Guiterrez of Aguinaldo's staff. We were thrown together under strange circumstances; captured by Malay smugglers; set adrift by a friend on the proa, and saved by you, gentlemen of the *Dom Sancho*, to whom once again we make our hearty thanks and apologies for thus delaying you on your course. The American consul at your African port—I suppose there is one there—will see that you are made whole for your detention in our behalf."

The Portuguese captain smiled at the boy's elaborate attempt at making an impression.

"And is the Filipino amigo or hostile?" he inquired.

"I owe the young American my life, Captain," the major replied. "I am amigo forever more."

The captain bowed; Ned grasped the Filipino's hand cordially; but Maskin rubbed away a critical smile about the corners of an incredulous mouth.

With the new position of the United States in Asiatic waters, neutral nations assumed a conciliatory attitude toward all Americans—especially those of official or military station. So the castaways were well cared for, and the long voyage to the South African coast was almost without incident.

Maskin, with his ready adaptitude to all emergencies, was ever ready to bear a hand and as he expressed it "work his passage," but Ned simply made

himself agreeable, resting on his "high military rank" as General Lawton's aid. The Filipino major, as became a man of importance in his own land, consorted only with the captain and his first officer; but Ned made himself at home in every quarter and with every inmate of that dirty, evil-smelling and overloaded tramp steamer which for days was his floating home.

Of one thing he soon assured himself in his investigations about the ship, and that was that the *Dom Sancho* though seemingly loaded with innocent looking merchandise was in reality freighted with arms, supplies and munitions of war. And he felt confident that these war supplies were intended for the Boers who, he knew, were fighting the British in South Africa.

In the home of the good Dutchman Verbeckhoeven, in which he had spent the rainy season at Manila Ned had heard much of the Boer side of the South African story; but when, as they sailed the Indian Ocean headed for South Africa direct, he questioned Maskin as to the right and wrong of the matter, the English adventurer was naturally quite on the other side.

"Don't ask me, Neddie," he said. "I was a Jameson raider, and I'm biased. The fact, is however, that the Dutchman of the Transvaal want all the pie and want the Britishers who made the pie to

pay them for letting them eat it. But that kind of pie-making don't set well on English stomachs, so they have just sailed in to be managing partner in the business or bust up the whole bake shop. And by the Jumping Jupiter! I'd like to sail in and help 'em. It'll be a pretty little war; for those Boers can put up a big fight. I know that, for I was in the Jameson raid."

Ned recalled General Lawton's words of the same nature; but he had no intention or desire to mix up in the affairs of South Africa; his main business was to get back to the Philippine campaign, and when the *Dom Sancho* spoke an eastward bound tramp on the high seas Ned, who had already prepared letters home and to Colonel Sinclair, detailing his adventures and why he was absent from his post of duty, assured the colonel that he would be back at the first opportunity. He would, indeed, have transhipped on the east bound tramp if it had not been for two things—lack of money and a slip-up in his plans.

The first was natural; the second he could not understand. Castaways like Maskin and himself were not usually provided with funds; but, somehow, his preparations to leave the *Dom Sancho* by the communicating boat had failed in spite of the Portuguese captain's apparent willingness and the Filipino ma-

jor's enthusiastic offer of help and his regrets that Ned had not jumped soon enough.

In fact, Ned had jumped, after having been detained below by the major's elaborate advices how to find Aguinaldo and just what suggestions toward a peaceful settlement he could make to the Filipino president. So, when, released at last, he had rushed to the deck, the returning boat had already shoved off and Ned trying to make it by a well directed leap, tripped somehow and fell overboard only to be fished out by two blundering Portuguese sailors and to be laid up two days in the "sick bay" suffering from the bruises that came from his floundering fall into the sea.

"Singular, wasn't it?" Maskin said as he sat beside his friend, "that the major should have kept you just too late and that you should have tripped up just as you did. Funny how things will happen sometimes. Let's see! didn't the major swear to you that he was amigo forever?"

And Maskin's noncommittal hand passed again over his incredulous mouth, while Ned was too greatly disappointed in the failure of his plans to question the major's share in it.

So the long voyage approached its end, and one fair morning the low coast line of East Africa hove in sight and, before many hours, the *Dom Sancho* was

sailing the waveless waters of Delagoa Bay headed towards the wharves and government buildings and hill side bungalows of the Portuguese town of Lourenzo Marquez—the unhealthiest town in South Africa, so its reputation runs.

Ned had made all needed preparations, through the Portuguese captain, for his interview with the resident American consul at Lourenzo Marquez. He had arranged with Maskin that they should both return by the first out-going steamer bound for the China Seas, so that they could rejoin their commands, and he had promised the Filipino major to use all his good influence with the consul to get the now "pacified" and friendly insurgent speedily back to Manila, in order that the major might throw his influence on the side of peace and submission.

Maskin was uneasy.

"I suppose you're right, Neddie," he said. "But I hate to turn my back on the Tommies fighting for the queen here in the gold and diamond country. It don't seem right for me to do so, and, don't you see, lad, here's my main chance to get back to home and mother. I'm dead tired don't you know, of following another flag when I ought to be defending my own."

"I don't wonder, Maskin," Ned replied. "But you're an American soldier until you're discharged from service, and your duty is with Lawton instead

of with—who's the British commander here, anyhow?"

"Well, when we got the last news, up at Tarlac, you know," Maskin replied, "it was General Buller, —Sir Redvers Buller, V. C. I suppose he commands yet, if the whole thing isn't finished up. He's a desperate fellow to fight, is General Buller. And, let me tell you, General Lawton is a baby—just a baby to General Buller for discipline. He's as hard as steel and as sharp as vinegar when it comes to working his men. He's the chap to avenge Majuba Hill and pay back what we fellows lost in the Jameson raid. Oom Paul wants to watch out for Buller, if he don't want to catch toko. But I suppose you're right, Neddie. I want to be square, and as long as I am a Yankee soldier I suppose Lawton is my man. But I do hate to turn in my tracks when I am so near to the Union Jack."

So they watched the port of Lourenzo Marquez come more distinctly into view, from the low-lying old town along the malarial shore to the European bungalows on the sloping hillside, and then went into the captain's cabin to join in a last farewell "loving cup" with the Portuguese captain and their Filipino friend, the major.

There was something queer in that loving cup. Neither Maskin nor Ned Pevear were on deck as the *Dom Sancho* rounded Ruben Point, where the

captain had promised to point out to Ned the big Government House, the fine Hotel Cardoza and the English and American flags floating above the consulates; they were not in evidence when the steamer warped alongside the wharf in the lower town and went through the quarantine tests and the official business that, so they had imagined, was to turn them over to the custody of the American Consul.

But when, late in the day, two almost senseless forms were smuggled out of the dirty forecastle of the *Dom Sancho* and bundled into a mule cart that crawled away from the steamer's wharf, Ned Pevear and Private Maskin were present although they knew it not, and as a slender dusky figure delivered them into the safe-keeping of a swarthy official at the railway station where the train pulled out for Pretoria across the Transvaal border, they did not hear the low words that passed between the Filipino and the Portuguese.

"Throw them out anywhere after you get into the Dutchman's land," said the treacherous Filipino. "You heard what the captain told you—they are dangerous. One is an English soldier; the other is an American, and they both know too much. If you don't wish them to give tidings of the captain's cargo and your own infraction of the neutrality laws—kill them or lose them, I don't care which; but get them far away from the English. I have

suffered too much from them to let them live. See to it that they are not heard from again, and both Don Emilio Aguinaldo, my president, and the owners of the *Dom Sancho* will reward you. Dead men tell no tales, and they will be dead enough I am certain when the Dutch president gets them in hand. He loves the English, the spy and the wide-awake foreigner no better than I do. I would that I could have my revenge by running the knife into the boy who has done to me only evil. But, my friend, we cannot always have our wishes. This is a neutral port; and I have avenged myself in the best way. Let the Dutchmen of the Transvaal complete my work, and I shall be satisfied. The Katipunan has kept its oath."

He gave a last vindictive kick to the drugged victims of his treachery, and the train pulled out for the Transvaal border, with the two castaways more than ever cast away, friendless and in danger, although they knew it not.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW NED WAS COMMANDEERED

It is a good three hundred and seventy miles by rail from Lourenzo Marquez, on the shores of Delagoa Bay, to Pretoria, in the heart of the land-locked South African Republic, better known as the Transvaal.

The train was far over the border before the insidious drug with which the Filipino major had "doctored the loving cup" in the cabin of the *Dom Sancho,* had spent its full effects and Ned Pevear and his comrade recovered their senses.

Maskin was the first to rise to the situation. Bound and hustled unceremoniously, like other "foreign freight," into a closed car on the railway between Delagoa Bay and Pretoria, he awoke dazed and weak, uncertain at first what his cramped position meant and what the peculiar motion of the freight train could be.

Even as he awoke, puzzled and perplexed, and tried, as one who has overslept, to stretch himself into consciousness, his bound arms gave him the first explanation. In the half darkened freight car

he sat up and tried to collect his thoughts; then the long-drawn yawn of the healthy boy who lay beside him helped those thoughts to a quick return.

"Is that you, Neddie?" he said.

"Yes, where are we? In sight of land yet," Ned answered with another effective yawn. "Why, no; we must be at the dock. I thought—hullo! What's the matter with my arms? They must be asleep too. I can't move 'em. I guess they—why! say, Maskin! I'm tied up? What's happened? Where are we? What's the matter?"

"Neddie," Maskin said slowly, "I reckon you are out of the mascot business. You're not one any more, or else I'm a hoodoo. Something has happened to us. We're on the cars, tied and prisoners—and, by the Jumping Jupiter! it's that Gugu major's game, and he's won."

"The major! why, where is he? Jucks! but I'm hungry as a bear. And b-r-r! how my mouth tastes. I wonder what was in that loving cup?"

"Treason was in it; some low-down game was in it," said Maskin, now thoroughly awake. "That blasted Kakiak drugged it, and here we are—I vow I don't know where."

"Feel around! P'raps he's here too," said Ned; he also, was sitting up now, trying to unloosen his bonds.

"Feel around!" cried Maskin. "Give me a pair

of arms and I will. I haven't any to feel with. I'm tied up, too."

"If he is here, I'll kick him," said Ned vindictively, flinging his legs wildly about, only to bark his shins against wooden boxes and piles of merchandise. "Ouch! Where under the sun are we and what are we up against?"

"Up against ourselves for a couple of blooming idiots," growled Maskin, working the ropes that bound him against the edge of something iron. "I'll bet—why, hello!—Neddie, you lie still. I've struck a bonanza—something sharp. Give me time and I'll saw us loose."

Maskin worked away vigorously but patiently at the "sharp edge." He gave a little chuckle of relief as he felt the sundered strands fall loose and then drop, broken in twain.

"Got my hands free," he cried jubilantly. "Roll over this way, Neddie, and I'll take you in hand—Oh! wait a bit, I'm stiffer than a tent peg. Let me work my fingers a spell. That's better. Now, let's have a hand at you."

And with clumsy, stiffened fingers he began to pick at Ned's bonds.

In good time the knots were loosened and Ned's arms, too, were freed. But the boy was stiffened from his cramped position and for a while his blood-

less fingers refused to move satisfactorily. At last, the released blood came pulsing through hands and arms once more and the boy sprang to his feet impatiently, only to give his head a resounding crack against the pile of stuff that hedged the prisoners about.

"Take it easy, Neddie, take it easy," Maskin suggested. "We've got to get our bearings before we can tell just where we are at. Hello! down you go, Neddie. Just lay low and play 'possum for a while. We don't want to let on we're alive if anyone goes snooping around here."

They both dropped to their former positions; the train slowed up, and finally stopped with the customary bump; testing hammers rang on the wheels beneath, as the train men went their rounds, and finally voices were heard outside their car. Then the door was unlocked and partially opened; questions and answers in an unexpected tongue came from the entrance; and two bearded faces, just distinguishable in the flood of light, looked down at the apparently sleeping figures.

Ned and Maskin lay perfectly quiet; with half veiled eyes they sought to catch a glimpse of their visitors, without exciting suspicion. Then more inquiries and replies followed; the visitors withdrew and the car door closed with a snap.

"Dutchman," declared Ned, who, thanks to the instructions of the yungvrouw Verbeckhoeven, could get just a bit of their talk understandingly.

"Boers!" whispered Maskin. "Ned, we've been shipped across the border into the Transvaal. We're in the hands of the Philistines. Say good-by to me, old chappie; I'm a Jameson raider and Oom Paul's people have got the drop on me."

"Could you make out what they said?" queried Ned. "I caught on to some of it; but it wasn't real Holland Dutch."

"No, it's Transvaal Dutch—Afrikander, Kaffir and old Holland all jumbled up," Maskin replied. "But I got hold of a bit of it. One fellow said we were English spies, caught at Lourenzo and shipped off here for Kruger to deal with; and the other fellow said Oom Paul would fix us; and they climbed over to get a look at us."

"Yes, I made out something like that, too," said Ned. "Well! we are in for it. What are we going to do?"

"Think a bit," Maskin replied. "This case calls for strategy. I've been in some tight places, but never in quite so tight a place as this. Let me think it out. There; we're off again. This is not Pretoria, that's certain."

"All right, you think and I'll forage," said Ned.

"I'm hungry enough to eat the iron rails I've been using for a pillow."

The boy's spirits were returning. Boers were better than Filipinos anyhow, he reasoned, and an American soldier was all right, even if he had been kidnapped and rushed across the border from a neutral port.

His foraging fared better than he expected. A broken cask "just leaked hard tack," so he announced; and in a pile of stuff he came across something that tasted like a combination of meat and chips.

"Biltong," Maskin declared, as Ned tossed him a strip. "It's the staple Boer provender on a 'trek' sort of a dried meat. We shan't starve at any rate. We can die on full stomachs."

"Die!" cried Ned. "Never say die, old man. They'll never dare to touch American soldiers."

"Not you perhaps, Neddie; but I was with Dr. Jameson, you know," said Maskin.

"I know; but since that you have been with Lawton," persisted Ned, "and you'll find that'll make a difference."

"Huh! you don't know these Boers," returned Maskin. "I do; you'll find out before we get to Pretoria."

"But what's the need of getting to Pretoria?"

queried Ned, as, chewing away at biltong and hard tack, he continued climbing about the freight car. "Now if I could only get a peek out doors and find the lay of the land, perhaps—why! Great Scott! Maskin; what do you think? Those fellows that came in here to get a peep at us forgot to padlock the door and the whole hasp has dropped away. See! it's open just a crack. Climb over here, old fellow, and let's see what we shall see."

Maskin was well over the jagged pile of merchandise before Ned's call was completed.

"You're right, boy!" he cried. "Easy now; go slow; we don't want anybody to see this act. Now, shove easy! there you are. By the blue Peter! but it's good to get a whiff of pure air. I wonder where we are?"

The boy and man looked curiously and anxiously through the narrow aperture they had made. The door they had forced was on the left side of the car and, through great breaks in the hill country they were traveling they could see, to the south, a vast stretch of dry dusty prairie land, into which a span of hills from the east jutted out like a headland or cape into the sea. The yellow grasses of the treeless plain were tinged with a mellow, almost attractive light by the slant rays of the setting sun; while, now and then, as they spanned a stream running low in the dry season, they would catch a glimpse of what water

could do in this land of arid and dusty immensity, in its islands of green and vari-colored hues—tropical plants and flowers and green waving willows brought into beauty by the clear, life-giving water of some hill-born stream.

But the oases were few and far between; the vast, far-reaching southerly plain was the chief feature of the landscape.

"What is it, prairie?" queried Ned, sweeping his hand toward the great box-like plateau.

"It's the veldt—the South African prairie," Maskin replied, "and it covers most of the Transvaal country except where it is broken by mountain ridges, ravines and hillocks—or, what should I say in Dutch? —bergs and neks and kloofs and kopjes—which we'll have to climb and stumble over unless we can find a path through by kranz or poort. Then we'll have to go wading through drifts, leaping over sluits or swimming across spruits, unless we can make friends with some voorlooper and just trek from kraal to dorp. We'll be lucky, though, if we don't fall afoul of some laagar or commando of burghers and be hammered on a klip or chucked into a vlef for a couple of rookineks who deserve only death for backing up the Uitlanders in their oorlag on the vierkleur of the Voortrekkers."

All of which Ned tried hard to follow with his limited knowledge of Dutch only to give up in de-

spair and, leaning back against the pile of freight, laugh heartily at Maskin's desire to show off his South African language, born of the Jameson raid and a brief Johannesburg residence.

For, in spite of the critical position in which they were placed, this pair of happy-go-lucky adventurers could not entirely lose the reckless nature and love of fun that are the characteristics of every healthy wanderer.

Again the boy thrust his head through the opening, where Maskin was still cautiously studying the landscape. The daring spirit was upon them both.

"What do you think, Maskin?" said Ned suddenly. "Could we drop it?"

"Just what I'm figuring over," his friend replied. "I could; I've done it before, you see. But I don't know about you, Neddie."

The American pride was aroused. The same heedless boy spirit that would not stand a "dare" from its classmates of Tolman's, could not abide a "stump" from its comrade of march, fight and adventure.

"Huh!" exclaimed Ned. "I guess I can do it if you can. Couldn't any more than break our necks, could we?"

"Perhaps not, Neddie," replied Maskin. "But you see, old chap, I want to save you for General

Lawton, and what's the good to me of home and mother if I haven't a neck to carry back to 'em?"

"Quit fooling, Maskin," said Ned. "I'm in earnest. I'll try it if you will. United we stand, divided we fall, you know."

"O, we'll fall all right," was Maskin's comment. "But where to?"

"It looks soft down there," said Ned. "If the train would only slack up a bit, I don't believe we'd hurt ourselves—much."

"Well," said Maskin, "It's an even chance between a prison and a fracture. I believe I'll risk the fracture, eh, Neddie?"

Ned nodded. "I'm with you," he said, and scurrying back over the pile of freight he began stuffing his pockets and the loose places inside his shirt front with hardtack and biltong.

"Hist! Neddie," called Maskin, drawing back into the car an instant. "There's a spruit—a brook—just ahead there. I can tell by the willow tops. Now there must be a bridge or viaduct or trestle spanning it. If so, the train will slacken just a bit and then's our chance. All ready?"

"And loaded," Ned replied, joining his friend.

"I'll crawl out to the buffer," said Maskin. "I think I can stretch it—there's an iron step between that and the door. Then I can swing off there. You

get on a good ready here at the door with your hand on the brace, and when you see me drop, you let go 'all holts' and drop too. Don't try to stiffen or brace yourself, just drop with a bit of a jump away to clear the wheels. Can you risk it, lad?" he inquired anxiously.

"Can I? you'll see," replied Ned confidently. "Do you suppose I never 'cut behind' a wagon or stole a ride on a railroad car before? Don't you worry; when you say 'now,' I'll follow."

Cautiously they slid the door open far enough to pass their bodies through the break. Liberty was all around them—in the air, in the vastness without, and in their throbbing hearts and their prison-hating souls. Maskin swung himself out, and with a mighty stretch of his long legs and a firm clutch at the intervening brace, actually spanned the space from door-opening to car-end and stood triumphantly above the buffer.

"All right?" he signalled, in query to Ned.

"All right," the boy nodded back as he grasped the iron beside the door jamb and, as Maskin had counselled, swung himself outside the car with a "good ready" for a jump and a drop.

The little kloof, or ravine, through which the stream underran the railway yawned before them. From where they clung it looked much wider and deeper than they had expected. The sides sloped

down to the "spruit" banked with red earth and green with willows and grasses below. Maskin waved a hand to Ned, and the boy replied with the same reassuring gesture.

"Now!" cried Maskin, as slowing up just a trifle the freight train ran on the viaduct.

As he gave the word he dropped with a crouching jump; Ned followed suit; and then———

Well, it seemed, so Ned declared, as if the world had been tipped upside down or was turning over and over. But it was he that was doing the turning. Over and over he rolled, through the red dust of the cut, bruised and torn by loose stones—"forty millions of them," he reported—through the first sparse growth and then the thicker grass and finally, with a bang that almost knocked the breath from his body, he brought up against a willow trunk and for an instant knew nothing more.

But breath and consciousness returned speedily and the boy, sitting upright beneath his willow tree buffer, looked anxiously about for his friend.

Maskin was just crawling, dripping and puffing, from the clear cold water of the "spruit;" then he dropped suddenly into the shelter of the grass.

"Duck down and lie low a minute, Neddie," he cried. "Let the train go by before you move."

Ned obeyed, and with anxiety that soon changed to relief saw the long train roll off the viaduct and

disappear in the gathering dusk, as it swept along the plateau above the mighty stretch of the veldt and go on its winding way to Pretoria.

Maskin came crawling up the incline.

"All here, Neddie?" he whispered. "No bones broken? Neck O. K.?"

"Seems to be," replied Ned. "I feel as if I had been run through a steam thresher; but I reckon I'm all here. Are you?"

"Wind all gone; but otherwise ready for my three meals," replied Maskin, trying himself by stretch and kick. "How's the provender?"

"Kind of crummy," said Ned, "dripping cracker crumbs" as he rose to his feet. "Reckon I'll have to take a dip in the stream and shake my clothes out if I don't want to make a cracker pudding of myself. Now what?"

"Night's coming down. Safest time for us to break out," Maskin replied. "Let's work down stream towards the veldt and camp out of sight of the railway. Then you can wash up; we'll have our banquet and after that we'll try to sleep warm till morning. But I don't think we can. This Transvaal weather is apt to be roasty by day and icy by night, don't you know."

They worked their way through the screen of willows until, a mile or so below their bridge of escape, they found a fair camping ground, where Mas-

kin determined to spend the night that was now fast closing upon them.

Ned, "just crazy with the itchy cracker crumbs," so he declared, took a dip in the stream and turning his clothes inside out fairly whipped them free of the obnoxious crumbs with willow twigs. Then, after a supper of "pounded cracker," biltong and water the two adventurers stretched themselves out for a sleep with the easy consciences and ready slumber of two healthy and seasoned wanderers.

The night beside the spruit was cold, indeed, as Maskin had declared a Transvaal night was apt to be, and the fugitives, just off shipboard, were not yet "acclimated." Before midnight Maskin grew restless and, stirring in his sleep, caught the lumbering noise of wheels below.

"It's an ox-cart on the veldt," he said. "There must be a road just beyond us. Maskin, old boy, you'd better make a reconnoissance."

He rose to his feet and felt his way towards the sound. It stopped almost as he came upon it; and hearing no sign of man, Maskin walked boldly up to the cart.

It was an ox-team piled high with hay, and he could just make out the shadowy form of the carter detaching the oxen.

Maskin was fairly shivering from cold; the hay was altogether too attractive.

"A Kaffir, outspanning," he said to himself. It looks safe. Hanged if I don't get Neddie down here and have a good warm bed for one night."

He felt his way back to their camp and aroused his comrade.

"Cold, Neddie?" he asked.

"Dreamed I was finding the North pole," replied the boy.

"Summer down yonder," replied Maskin. "Come along. I've found a load of hay to sleep on."

Ned rose stiffly; his bruises and the cold bath were asserting themselves.

"B-r-r!" he said. "I'm as stiff and cold as an iceberg. Lead on to the hay, old man. I'm with you."

Cautiously they approached the hay team. The yoke of oxen were grazing not far off; the driver had evidently left his team for some nearby and known shelter; so without more ado, Ned and his "bunkie" made warm and comfortable nests for themselves in the high-piled hay, and were asleep almost before they knew it.

"We'll crawl out before daylight," Maskin said.

But when they awoke in the morning they were on the move. They had overslept; tired nature had asserted itself, and had put a veto upon their decision for an early leave taking.

Ned stirred uneasily; then he opened his eyes, un-

certain whether he was on shipboard, freight car or in paradise—for the hay was soft and his nest was warm.

But his eyes slowly opening, suddenly grew big with surprise. For there, sitting cross-legged on the hay, a rifle across his knees and with eyes looking out from under broad shaggy brows, a massive, heavily bearded man with a great slouch hat was regarding him with watchful intensity.

And quick-witted Ned knew at once that Maskin's humorous threat of danger had indeed come true and that he was trekking to Pretoria, "commandeered" by a Boer.

CHAPTER XV

WHAT ANOTHER PRESIDENT SAID

NED PEVEAR never let an opportunity slip to take the initiative. He overhauled his wits and his philology in the same moment and, recalling the yungvrouw Verbeckhoeven's instructions, he put his salutation into the best Dutch he could master.

"Good morning, sir," he said. "I hope I see you well."

The big Boer with the gun actually smiled at the boy's salutation.

"I thought you English," he said. "You look it. Are you a burgher's boy?"

"I am an American, sir," Ned replied unhesitatingly.

"So! we have many among us," said the Boer; "of what commando?"

"Of no commando—yet," Ned answered diplomatically.

"Then, why—ah, so! and your companion," said the bearded Boer, his eyes falling upon the still sleeping Maskin. "He is English, eh?"

"He too, is an American soldier, sir," Ned an-

swered, slowly, feeling his way carefully in his imperfect Dutch.

"You are no Afrikanders then—nor Outlanders, eh?" the man with the rifle said; "nor yet rookineks? And yet you speak fair Dutch. How then?"

Ned remembered his ancestry and his opportunities.

"My mother came from old Dutch American stock in New Jersey," he replied; "and I learned to speak Dutch in the home of Mynheer Verbeckhoeven at Manila."

The geographical names were as Greek to the Boer; but the name Verbeckhoeven was an open sesame.

"A good name," he said; "you are to be one of us then—and your companion?"

Ned was surely getting into hot water. He did not know how far he could safely commit himself, and he was perplexed as to the extent to which he could vouch for Maskin. But that worthy spared him the trouble.

"Tell the gentleman, Neddie," he said with his customary coolness in danger, "that I am not a Dutch scholar but that a conversation in English or Spanish will afford me pleasure. And remember, I'm an American soldier, Neddie. Don't you forget that even if I should happen to."

"Ah so! it is English—the language of our foes

he speaks," said the Boer, "or is it American? And what says he?"

"He says—" Ned proceeded to reply slowly, "he says—in American—that if you will talk in that or even Spanish he will gladly speak with you. Those languages he knows."

"Ah! he is American too—and a soldier? He can fight?" queried the burgher.

"Valiantly; ferociously," cried Ned. "He has fought through all the campaigns of our army in the Philippines."

"Then indeed he is the man for us," the Boer declared. "We have need of all good men and true who fight. We welcome all who come to take up arms with us against the tyranny of England. Give you good health, my brother Americans; the sons of one republic will help the sons of another republic in their struggle for freedom. Arise, you are not prisoners; you are friends. See, my brothers," he called out to others who seemed to be near at hand, "we have here recruits from the far off land over the sea—not the red necks—the Englishmen—but the brave Americans."

And as Ned and Maskin, permitted to rise from the dangerous "commandeering" of the business-like rifle, struggled to a sitting posture, in the hay, they discovered, walking and riding beside and be-

hind the ox-team, a dozen sturdy men, young and old.

Maskin drew his breath sharply through his closed teeth.

"Tchp! We slept in a hornet's nest," he ejaculated. "It's a Dutch detachment bound for Pretoria, I fancy. Steer close, Neddie, or we're on the rocks. I'll follow you."

Forced to tell his story, Ned in the best Dutch he could master,—which was indeed quite a different speech from the "taal" or low Dutch of the Transvaal Boers,—detailed the story of how he and his comrade became separated from their command in the Philippines and had at last turned up in the Transvaal. He was careful in all his statements and, while all that he said was strictly true, he gave no hint of Maskin's nationality nor his connection with the Jameson raid. Ned knew that he was standing on uncertain ground.

"You are just the men we want, friends," said the leader of the detachment; "we are part of the Pretoria town commando, drawn from the out-districts, and it will give us joy to add to our ranks two brave American soldiers—a general's aid and a fighting private."

"But I don't know that we are ready to join you," declared Ned. "We are not yet discharged

from our own army and it would not be right to accept service under another flag."

"Of that we must be the judges," the leader replied; "the four-colored flag of the Boer republic shelters men of every nation and fighters from every army. In defence of liberty, age or nationality count for little. Those who come not willingly must come then,—anyway."

Ned shrugged his shoulders.

"As you will," he said. "You've got the whip handle."

But all the same he determined to enter a protest against this enforced enlistment when he could get a hearing from some higher authority in the capital.

The opportunity came sooner than he expected. For while the out-district detachment of the Pretoria commando was progressing leisurely towards the capital, and while Ned and Maskin were making the best of the situation as was their custom,—there came a swift rider from the town urging them to hasten their movement as the Pretoria commando was ordered to the front at once, and all available men were needed. So the ox-team and the foot march were given up at once. From farm and dorp near by horses were commandeered; and before noon, next day, the detachment was riding into Pretoria with the two American soldiers forced into the ranks and keeping the pace with the rest.

"I don't know about this, Neddie," Maskin whispered to his friend, as for an instant they galloped side by side past the great forts that guarded the entrance to the beautiful Pretoria valley, where the capital of the Dutch Afrikanders nestled amid its refreshing environment of green; "I've always made free choice of every flag I've fought under, and I'm not built right to be commandeered in this high-handed style under the vierkleur."

"What's your row against one more color, Maskin?" demanded Ned with a laugh. "You've been fighting under the red, white and blue. They're only asking you here to add the green to the other colors —and what's the matter with the green? It's the color of fighting Ireland."

"But not the four colored flag against the Union Jack!" Maskin declared. "I can't go that. I'm English."

"You're an American soldier, that's what you are, old chap," said Ned. "And I don't see how we can be forced into another service when we haven't given up our own. I'll make one last kick, anyhow."

The "kick," if he was to make it, was not far distant; for, speedily, the detachment was galloping into Pretoria past the new defences outside the city, past the park of captured British cannon in Station Square, over the Arcadia Bridge and up Church street to Government Square, where, in the shadow

of the golden Liberty that topped the stately Government Building, the town commando rendezvoused for its departure to the front.

Already the muster was well nigh complete and even as the leader of the detachment which had brought in Ned and Maskin was presenting the new additions to the cornet in command as his "American recruits," a covered carriage, drawn by a span of big black horses and escorted by cavalry, dashed into the square and halted before the mustered commando in front of the Government Building.

A cheer rose from burghers and Boers in the big square; the soldiers in line presented arms and as the door of the carriage was swung open by a young aid or attache the figure of a fat, heavy-faced old man with a scraggy fringe of white whiskers under his ample chin, stepped ponderously from the coach, and again the people cheered and the flag of white, red, blue and green dipped in recognition and salute.

"By the Jumping Jupiter! Neddie," whispered Maskin; "it's Oom Paul himself."

Maskin was right; the new comer was indeed "Oom Paul himself." And Ned, full of his own affairs and determined upon his appeal for justice, sprang impulsively forward and found himself face to face with one of the most remarkable characters of the nineteenth century—Stephanus Johannes Paul

Kruger, president of the South African republic and dictator of the Transvaal.

What Ned saw was a big man, big every way—big framed, big boned, big bodied, big faced; dressed in big, ill-fitting clothes; the vest and loosely-hung frock coat, wrinkled and far from clean; the vest-front spattered from careless table manners and equally careless pipe smoking. His black "high hat," unbrushed and ill-fitting, surmounted a great head and a broad face fringed with its undergrowth of gray whiskers; long loose trousers and huge, lumpy, unpolished shoes completed the unattractive figure of a most remarkable man, and Ned, anxious though he was about his own affairs, still could not fail to notice the big curved pipe in the president's mouth, his inseparable companion and most convenient assistant.

"Sir!" cried Ned, summoning his best and briefest Dutch to his aid. "We protest; we do not wish to join your army; we are strangers."

With one hand holding the bowl of his big pipe and the other thrust into his trousers' pocket, "Uncle Paul" stood still and silent an instant, surveying the protesting lad.

"Oof!" he said at last, slowly and deliberately; "A likely boy. How old?"

"I am nearly seventeen, sir," replied Ned.

"Within the available age, then," declared the

president. "Our limit is sixteen. You'll make a good burgher."

"But I am none, sir," protested Ned. "We are Americans, I and my comrade. We have no quarrel with the English or with you, sir. We wish to get back to our command."

"Your command? Soldiers are you?" continued the president.

"Yes, sir; American soldiers, on service in Luzon —in the Philippines," replied Ned.

"And how came you here? American soldiers, and undischarged, you say. Deserters perhaps?" reasoned Oom Paul; and cutting off Ned's indignant protest, he turned to the cornet for information.

The leader of the outlying detachment which had brought the American soldiers into town briefly explained the affair. Through it all Maskin remained silent.

The president smoked awhile without a word of comment. Then, removing his big pipe, he spat carelessly about him, and finally spoke.

"So," he said; "you are fugitives from the American army, brought under our protection. It is the duty of those protected to repay their protectors in the best way. Our country is invaded; our republic is threatened; your duty is to serve those who have served you. As seasoned American fighters you can

be of excellent service to us; your place is in the ranks of my burghers, and there you must remain."

He turned away as if his words were final. But Ned did not intend that they should be.

"It is not so, sir," he cried. "I protest. We are American soldiers seeking to return to our own service. You have no right to detain us. I appeal to the American consul."

The president turned heavily but quickly on the persistent lad. His voice rolled out in the great roar his compatriots knew so well. He shook his big pipe as if in emphasis of his words, as he repeated his decision.

"Appeal!" he said; "there is no appeal, boy. When the independence of my country is endangered I admit no right to any within our borders save that of helping us defend our liberties. The fathers of you Americans fought England to secure your liberty; you must fight to help us maintain our own. That is all; rejoin your ranks, my young brother. He who putteth his hand to the plough must not turn back."

And without another word the big president of the small republic turned and walked down the line of burghers of the town commando, while Ned and Maskin were hustled into the ranks, angry and protesting, but powerless.

Ned Pevear was the angry and protesting one; Maskin still remained silent.

But when Ned looked at him for support the tall soldier simply shrugged his shoulders.

"It's no use, Neddie," he whispered. "We're in for it, and can't get out—just yet. Let's make the best of the bargain, and bide our time."

So, making a virtue of necessity, Ned yielded to the pressure of his comrade's hand and subsided into his place—a commandeered American in the ranks of the fighting Boers.

"We've got no money, and we've got no way of escape," Maskin reminded him. "Your consul wouldn't believe you, even if there's one here now. The English army is our only salvation. If we are going that way—why, it's our best chance; and what will be, will be."

The president was addressing the commando in a few farewell words of defiant and determined patriotism, well seasoned with quotations from the Bible and parallels between the burghers of the Transvaal and the Israelites of the Promised Land. And as the commando marched out of Government Square to take the railway cars that were to carry them to Commandant Cronje's forces in the field, Ned had his last look at President Kruger, an impressive and long remembered figure, uncouth but determined, his high hat lifted from his

big head, his great pipe waving in blessing and farewell to his fellow-countrymen and their enforced associates, leaving for the field of war to fight and die in defence of "the liberties of Africa."

"The liberties of Africa" seemed to be in jubilant hands just then. For, with the exception of a small minority of men and boys, who, like Ned and Maskin, had been commandeered, or forced, into service under the vierkleur, the most of the town commando were enthusiastic over the triumphant defiance which the Boers under Joubert and Cronje and Botha had already made against the invading armies of England.

It was then, for the first time, that Ned Pevear and Maskin learned the news of England's costly advance upon the Transvaal and the stubborn defiance and victorious resistance of the burghers—born fighters of the veldt.

For, making the best of a bad bargain, as they always did, Ned and his big comrade fraternized with their sturdy, bearded and stalwart comrades of the town commando, and assuming the good nature of fellow soldiers and the frank, adaptable ways of Americans, they were soon "hail fellows" with all and were voted as valuable and welcome additions to the burgher ranks.

It was thus they learned that White was shut up and besieged in Ladysmith, that Kekewich was iso-

lated in Kimberly, that Baden-Powell and his "red necks" were securely locked up in Mafeking; they heard how Lord Methuen had been terribly defeated and "smashed up" by Cronje at Magersfontein, and how Buller, twice attempting to force and ford the Tugela river, had been twice driven back by the Boers of the river trenches, and was now awaiting reinforcements; how everything had seemed to go so gloriously for the Boers and so disastrously for the British that the English government had evidently changed its mind about this being a "little war" and was hurrying more troops into Africa—from England and all its colonies—and had sent to the front two of its great generals—Roberts, the hero of Kandahar, as its commander-in-chief, and Kitchener, the captor of Khartoum, as his chief of staff.

Maskin was deeply impressed by these reports. He knew what it meant to England to have Buller, her most daring disciplinarian defeated, and Roberts, her greatest soldier, hurried into the enemy's country to retrieve disaster. To Ned, however, the names and the places signified little; for the American boy believed only in Lawton and Dewey, and did not appreciate the full meaning of the condition of things in South Africa—except that matters were going bad for the English and that the Boers were "putting up a big fight." It must be confessed too, that, with all the traditions of an American boy who bore

the Revolution and Eighteen-Twelve in mind, he did not know as he was really sorry, save for Maskin's sake; for the Afrikanders were fighting for the existence of their republic, he declared, and that always appeals to Americans when they do not take the trouble to look beneath the surface for reasons, motives or principles.

So, in the long railroad ride that brought the Boers nearer and nearer to Cronje's camp, the two enforced recruits in the burgher ranks learned much of the Boer side of the affair and could only speculate as to the British side. But Maskin was firm in his belief of the unassailable strength of Great Britain, and in English valor, as against Dutch doggedness and persistency.

"Right or wrong, the Union Jack is bound to win, Neddie, and to wave over the golden Liberty on the Capitol at Pretoria before many months are over," he cried. "If Buller has been driven back he'll just be up and at it again; that's his sort, don't you know. And if Lord Roberts has taken the field, why, it's 'good-by, Oom Paul!' Roberts never gives up. But if you think I'm going to fight the Queen's Tommies you don't know your Uncle Maskin. I know just how to sham sick; and I'll be in the hospital before I'm pushed into the firing line, if it takes a hand to get me there,"

Ned shook his head in doubt.

"I don't know about that," he said. "I don't want to fight, either. I don't just like these Boers, but they do talk up for their side, and they are fighting for liberty. So I don't know where I'm at. Unless there is some decent way for an American soldier to play non-combatant I don't see how I can crawl out of the fight."

"You trust to me, Neddie, if you really want to be a non-combatant," said Maskin. "This liberty yarn is all tommy-rot. I fought for Jameson, you know"—here his voice died to a whisper—"only don't you give that away. I'm afraid I'd get into something besides the hospital if these Dutch boors found that out. Liberty! What Oom Paul is after is liberty to play tyrant; and England lets no one do that."

"Except herself," said Ned, so significantly that for a moment Maskin deliberately turned his back on the boy in a huff; but as quickly he repented.

"Don't be an idiot, Neddie," he said. "You don't know what you are talking about; but you'll see who's right soon. As far as I can make out the British are putting up the same fight your Yankee grandfathers did; and Kruger is giving 'em the same bluff as our Dutch King Georgy did in your Revolution. It's 'no taxation without representation' over again, don't you know, and our boys are here to defend the right."

Ned was not quite sure as to Maskin's statement; but one thing did rankle within him—the way in which he and his friend had been forced into a fuss they really had no part in; and this weighed more with him than his half-sympathy with the Boers and Maskin's defence of the British "invaders."

They were nearing the British invaders rapidly. And when they left the train at the foot of the hills around beleaguered Ladysmith the fearful sights of war were all about them. Ruin and death seemed everywhere. Through defences that seemed well-nigh impregnable; in the shadow of crest-embattled kopjes; across drifts enfiladed by trench and breast-work; through scattered laagars, changing almost as swiftly as made, as the energetic and mobile Boers shifted positions in answer to the daily demands of vigorous defence; by hospitals and prison camps where the sick and wounded of both armies suffered from the tragic fortunes of a bloody war, Ned and his comrade were swiftly marched, as their commando swung about beleaguered and valiantly defended Ladysmith to join the camp of the advance division of Joubert's army at Pieter's Hill and Potgieter's Drift and Spion Kop.

It was towards the last debatable point that Ned's commando was marching. For the Boer right, driven back by General Clery of Warren's Division of the British army at Three Tree Hill within its

semicircle of embattled crests, had been forced to the almost impregnable position at Spion Kop, and there proposed to make a determined stand.

But, as the commando moved rapidly towards this critical position, a Boer detachment escorting British prisoners to the rear passed them as they tramped over the dusty highway in a kranz, or cleft, between the yellow hills.

The prisoners were halted at the roadside to let the hurrying reinforcements pass, and as they did so, out from the throng of captured "red necks" arose a voice in greeting and inquiry.

"Hello! Maskin; old boy," came the call. "What are you doing in there with the Dutchmen? Going to get square with them somehow for Krugersdorp? What's one of the Jameson boys doing among those beggars?"

Krugersdorp! It was the famous fight in which Jameson's raiders made their first and only stand, when they invaded Dutch territory for the relief of the Outlanders in Johannesburg. The name in English mouths was as a red flag to the Transvaal bull—or boar.

"Krugersdorp!" cried their commandant. "Who was at Krugersdorp? You?" he confronted Maskin wrathfully. "I thought you were a rookinek; you look like one. What are you—a spy? We make short work of such cowards."

Maskin's blood was up.

"I am no spy," he cried hotly, unmindful of consequences. "I did fight you at Krugersdorp, and I owe you one for it. But I am neither spy nor coward. Stand out like men, any three of you, and I'll show you my English blood."

There was an angry murmur in the ranks. But the Boer commander crushed it down.

"So! he talks Dutch too, eh?" he said. "But here is no time for private quarrels now," he cried quickly. "March on! our duty lies ahead. But if this man is neither a spy nor coward—just a Britisher who seeks to hide himself under the American flag—we'll give him a chance to prove himself, brothers. For he shall stand in the very front of the firing line and be made to rush down upon his own when we drive the red necks into defeat and death from our trenches on Spion Kop. Hark! there go the guns; to the front, brothers! and down with the red invaders of the republic."

CHAPTER XVI

UNDER TWO FLAGS

THERE was no time for resistance, entreaty, protest or revenge. Already the battle was on; already the British troops, victorious at Ventner's Spruit and Trichard's Drift, had forced the Boer advance back to the shelter of their works on Spion Kop and were preparing to capture that high-placed bar to the British advance on Ladysmith.

It had all come about so quickly that even Ned could not decide what he should do. All day he had tramped with the commando girt about with the roar and sound of battle, as from hill and trench and breastwork in that rocky circle of battle the tug of war came between Boer and Briton. And now Maskin was in danger. As his comrade had stood by him in time of stress so would he cast his lot with that comrade in spite of Boer revenge and hatred. If Maskin was forced into the front rank to his death, there too would Ned Pevear go; for there, so he believed, his duty lay.

On Spion Kop—or Spy Out Hill—twenty miles west of beleaguered Ladysmith, the Boer general had

decided to make his stand, where from the great flat top, his cannons and rifles commanded the British advance. But the British generals, with the same contempt for "backwoods tactics" that Braddock had in the Pennsylvania forests, marched straight into the frontiersman's net. For they prepared to surround the Boer position and, throwing out wings on the right and left, swiftly and surely to flank and encircle the fighting burghers and thus enclose or crush them all in a great and relentless trap. But when it comes to trapping, the Boers, so Ned decided, knew the trick best.

The flanking business began well. The Boer right was threatened and crippled; but when the British general saw that the high and historic hill-top of Spion Kop—the eminence from which the first Boers in the days of their "Great Trek," spied out, and then descended to occupy, their "promised land" of Natal—was the key to the Boer position about Ladysmith, he decided to force it by storming the heights.

This he did with his artillery and his bayonets and, acting under orders from General Buller, the "rush line" fought its way up, capturing ridge after ridge, while Warren on the left and Lyttleton on the right brought all their force to bear upon driving the brave Boers from the trenches that commanded the heights which the clambering British had won.

There, on the hill top a thousand feet in air, Boer and Briton confronted each other; and it was to reinforce their brothers on the highest ridge that the commando into which Ned and Maskin had been so unceremoniously forced, climbed the red, rock-sown northern slope of Spion Kop.

Where Thornycroft had guided and Woodgate through the night had led, to his death, the British rush-line up to the southern spur of the "kopje," in the cool of that January morning, the fearful fight for possession went on. Exposed to a ferocious fire, high on a hill too steep for a mountain battery to scale, doggedly holding a dry, treeless and waterless summit, and with his ammunition running low, Thornycroft—a British Lawton for size and tenacity—clung to the hill all that bitter day, in the face of a relentless, never ceasing rain of shot and shell from the Boer batteries and trenches that commanded the British position.

Again and again the Cameronians, the King's Rifles and the Fusiliers charged the hostile trenches, clambering over the rock-broken spaces, clearing them of the Boer defenders by a dose of cold steel; again and again, with a Mauser fire that was simply unbearable, would the Boers return to the attack and force the British out of the captured trenches and fairly off the main plateau.

Death was everywhere. Ned felt that he had

never seen war before and that his campaigning in the Philippines was, as Colonel Sinclair had said, little more than a game of tag, when compared with this stubborn struggle for possession on the ensanguined shelf and slope of Spion Kop.

Flung straightway into the advance firing line—for Maskin had disappeared altogether and Ned did not know whether he was alive or dead—the boy was fairly swept along in the rush that flung itself on the little knot of British soldiers caught in the backward drop from the captured Boer trenches as the burghers rushed the lines.

Up went the hands of the entrapped "rookineks;" down fell their rifles in the trenches.

"We surrender!" they shouted.

"Forward, brothers! secure your prisoners!" came the order of the cornet of Ned's commando; and the burghers rushed upon the trenches, the cornet leading, with Ned, a still uncertain but very active participant, running with the rest. Curiosity will often carry a boy farther than desire or interest.

But as the Boers rushed to secure the prisoners, Ned saw an officer,—so conspicuous in height, white helmet and audacity, as, even in that exciting moment, to suggest Lawton to the lad—dash forward to the trench. It was Colonel Thornycroft.

The Boers were not thirty yards away.

"Surrender? Who says surrender?" demanded

the intrepid English colonel hotly. "I command on this hill, and there's no surrender here. Blaze away if you want to. We're ready for you."

Then he fairly forced his momentarily weak-kneed men from the trench and waved forward the companies from which he had broken away to stop the surrender.

"To me, Middlesex! Charge!" he shouted.

The men of the Middlesex regiment, two companies in all, sprang to their work with a long British cheer; after them pressed the Royal Lancasters and the Fusiliers, rallying from their repulse, and with Thornycroft and his dismounted troopers leading the impetuous rush for recovery, the British line closed once again upon the Boer advance and trenches, and swept the hill top clear of their foemen with one victorious charge.

But that charge fairly littered the rock-strewn table top of Spion Kop with the dead, dying and wounded of both armies; and Ned Pevear, swept back as he had been borne forward by the desperate rush, tripped over the body of a fallen Boer and tumbled headlong into a debated trench; there, with the roar of guns and the snip of Mausers sounding in his ears, he struck heavily against a blood-spattered rock of the kopje and lay, stunned and silent, amid the dead occupants of this twice reconquered trench.

The tide of battle swept over him, but he scarcely

ON SPION KOP.

"Ned Pevear, swept back by the desperate rush, tumbled headlong into a debated trench, and lay, stunned and silent."

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knew it; the horrible stream of war's overflow—the staggering wounded, the dying and the dead—fell into that slaughter hole to keep him company; the day of battle wore on to its close, and Ned finally came to himself only to discover that Colonel Thornycroft, yielding to necessity, lack of guns and of ammunition, had finally retired from the position he had won at so great and terrible a cost and held so tenaciously and had withdrawn his men from the battle-torn, blood stained height of Spion Kop.

"Better six good battalions safely down the hill," the fighting colonel declared, with his eye on the threatening Boer batteries along the ridges not a mile away, "than a mop-up in the morning."

So he left the ground he had so gallantly and fatally won, dropped down to the water and to safety, and crossing the Tugela, awaited the orders that should mean a new advance against the dogged Dutch who beat back the relief of Ladysmith. And, once again, Spion Kop fell into the hands of the victorious Boers.

So too did Ned Pevear. Aroused from his long unconsciousness and encumbered by the horrid coverlet of dead within the trench, he was struggling to his feet, wondering whether he was under the flag of Briton or of Boer, when a long arm and a muscular hand fairly dragged him out of the trench.

"Well, well, Neddie! By the Great Jumping Ju-

piter! but is it really you? Alive or dead, lad? Don't know, do you?" And Ned to his great joy found himself beside the faithful Maskin.

"I reckon I'm alive, Maskin," the boy replied. "But I don't just know. Fact is, I have been spending so much of the day down there that I think I'm tired of being dead just as you sometimes are of living. Great old fight, though, wasn't it? I got knocked over when the British colonel charged our commando, and they've been filling up that trench all day long, never asking me to let 'em."

Thus indifferent to death and danger does battle make men. Upon that fatal field of slaughtered Briton and of stricken Boer, Ned Pevear could still laugh and joke, glad that he was alive and that he had his friend once more, even though many another mother's son lay cold and stiff in trench and ditch and cleft.

"But how are you, old chap?" he cried, fairly clinging to Maskin's arm; "safe and sound, eh? How did you get here and where have you been fighting?"

"Putting up a great strategy against fighting my own Tommy brothers, Neddie," Maskin replied. "I said they shouldn't make me, and they didn't. I was rushed up the line just as you were, wondering how I could get over to the Union Jack without seeming to play deserter when there came a lot of battered

Boers down the slope. They were badly cut up and dropped as they staggered down; so when somebody yelled for stretcher bearers I just picked up one of the wounded Dutchmen and ran with him down the slope where I saw a Red Cross flag. I dumped him down for the doctors, grabbed a stretcher and yanked it up the hill, got one of the Irish brigade with a shot in his shoulder to give me a lift with it and went up and down three times with the wounded. Then my Irishman gave out with his broken shoulder; I commandeered two Kaffirs but they skedaddled, as Lawton's boys say, and I put in the whole day as a hospital assistant and non-combatant. I told you I'd get to the hospital somehow, you know, and I did it; and without losing a hand either. When the Tommies let go the hill at last we hospital fellows were ordered up here to pick out the wounded and here I am. Play hospital aid, Neddie, and we'll both keep clear of the row."

All night Ned and Maskin kept at their grewsome task of carrying wounded Boer and Briton, alike, down from that hill of death. Before morning dawned, however, they both flung themselves down, dead tired, into a heavy sleep, and the sun shone hot on the kopje before they roused themselves again to work.

Their own commando had been transferred to another position, and when an officer of the Irish

brigade came galloping by, the two saluted for orders.

"Something to do, is it?" the Irishman demanded. "Go in and fight, boys; or here! fighting is over for a while, I'm thinking. What's your commando?"

"Pretoria-town," answered Maskin. "We don't know where it is; we've been hospital helpers all night."

"'Tis English speakin' ye are, hey?" said the officer.

"Yes sir," replied Ned. "American soldiers on service here."

"'Merican, hey? And lost your commando?" said the officer. "Well, see here. It's tellin' me to get swift word to Cronje at Bloemfontein they are. Can ye ride?"

"Give us horses and see, sir," cried Maskin. "We've galloped all over Luzon after Lawton."

"Rough riders, hey?" the Irishman said. "Well, byes, commandeer a couple of nags, and ride like lightning with these despatches to Cronje. Them's the general's orders. Ye'll find the old lion at Bloemfontein or beyond. Ride close, and if one of ye is shot let the other grab the papers and get on. It's life and death to find him. Buller'll be for retreatin' now, I'm thinking, or thrying to join Rob-

erts who's coming into the west, they say. Jump your best, byes; and show your orders, if you get stopped. They'll pass ye at any of our outposts."

"Explain to the cornet of our commando, will you, Major?" Maskin said. "We don't want him to think we've skipped. We'll find him first and report, if you say so."

"Find him, is it?" cried the major. "Why, ye ijits! it's findin' Cronje I'm after orderin' ye! I'll square this with your cornet. Here! here is a requisition for two horses, if you can find 'em. Pick out the best ye can lay your hands on and ride for all ye're worth."

The two comrades needed no second command. They saluted and hurried to the nearest laagar of the Boers, where two horses were speedily found, and, well armed and provisioned, they were soon galloping, with a running Kaffir as their guide, through Acton Homes and the grim passes of the Drakenbergs and so on, across the great red veldt to Fricksburg and Ladybrand and Bloemfontein.

"Did you ever see such luck, Neddie?" demanded Maskin as they raced across the veldt. "Non-combatants, despatch bearers, what not—anything but fighters against the Union Jack on the Boer firing line. What d'ye say to losing our way and getting these despatches into Roberts's hands?"

"I say no," Ned promptly replied. "We took this job in good faith and no one shall ever call me a deserter or a spy."

"Rot," cried the Englishman. "How can it be deserting to go to our own; or playing the spy, to give up what was forced upon you?"

"I don't know; but it doesn't sound right," Ned declared. "That fellow trusted us, because we were American soldiers, see? And I'm not going to play false."

Maskin grumblingly consented to Ned's decision, even while trying to reason it down, and the twain, with but two changes of horses, rode on to Bloemfontein.

But, in the capital of the Orange Free State, ally to the Transvaal and chief sufferer in the war in which its burghers had no cause, save that of kin, to become involved, the despatch-bearers learned that Cronje, the Boer general, who had rushed his mobile forces by the peculiar Boer tactics of "interior lines" from the left of Joubert's Natal army on the Tugela to the right on the Modder nearly three hundred miles to the west, had gone to his camp in the field at Magersfontein, near to beleaguered Kimberly, towards which town, so they learned at Bloemfontein, Lord Roberts even then was hastening with relief.

"But Roberts will never get beyond Cronje," they

were told, as they changed mounts in the Market Square at Bloemfontein. "The old Voortrekker knows more tricks of battle in a day than the British 'Bobs' as they call the rookinek general, could learn in a year."

"Lot they know of Bobs," said Maskin. "He'll do up Cronje before the Dutchman can say Jack Robinson."

But the Jameson raider did not say this openly in the Free State capital. And he and Ned, buckling down to their duty, were soon speeding away from green, hill-girdled Bloemfontein, and so galloped on across the veldt and beside the narrow Modder to where at Magersfontein, they hoped to find the Boer general, Cronje.

And there, indeed, they found him. Dusty and worn from their ride over the great Karoo—the vast plain of the Orange Free State—they accosted the chief of the western army of the Boers at his camp in captured Magersfontein—that death trap for the gallant Highlanders of the Black Watch and the Grenadiers.

They came up with the famous Boer hero grouped with his lieutenants before one of the great Cruezot guns with which he had so often "stood off" the British attack—a short, thick-set, determined looking man, he was, with beady little eyes and a bearded mouth much like General Grant's. A man, indeed,

much of Grant's size and build and with many of that stern American fighter's ways, was this the real Boer fighter, the hero of Majuba hill and Krugersdorp, General Piet Cronje, "the old lion of the veldt."

He wasted but few words upon the dusty and disreputable looking despatch-bearers.

"They send me warnings, and I must have men," the general said. "How can I hold the line of the Modder without reinforcements? How can I take Kimberly without help?" he demanded of the gigantic commandant, Steenkamp, who towered above him. "Ride back, brothers, to those who sent you and bid them bring in the reserves from the Transvaal, or our lines will surely be broken through. I have scarce ten thousand men to hold them safe against the British host. Let them send me more if they would see Modder held and Bloemfontein secure. Ride, ride back with the message; ride and spare not."

"Would you write out the despatch, General, while we take a bite?" Maskin suggested. "We have been in the saddle from Spion Kop to here, and we can return as speedily; but papers tell better than words, which may be silenced by British bullets."

Cronje nodded and prepared his reply, while the

messengers sought an hour's rest and refreshment. Then they were in the saddle again, spurring back to the left wing of the Boer army.

But as they sped away from the kopjes at Magersfontein and left behind them the big Cruezot and the stocky general, and skirting the Modder, came to where, at Klips Drift, you cross to the high road that stretches away to Bloemfontein, a shot rang out as they forded the drift and Ned's horse fell dead in mid-stream.

The lad struggled to his feet and caught at Maskin's stirrup.

"Climb up behind me, Neddie; something's in the path," said the big soldier.

"I don't want to fire if they're Boers; I don't want to fire if they're British," Ned declared. "But I tell you, Maskin, no one is going to get a clip at me without getting as good as he sends." And he unslung the rifle at his back.

"Up hands! or you're dead men. We've got you covered," rang out the stern command at the ford.

"Let's have a look at you, first," shouted Maskin. "We fight fair; so you needn't snipe us."

"Are you English?" came the demand, and into the stream, rode four troopers, with a rough uniform, slouch hats, khaki and bandoleers.

"American soldiers commandeered by Kruger,"

replied Maskin. "Who are you? Here, Neddie, take the papers and run," he whispered. "I'll stand 'em off a bit."

The boy, halting but an instant between duty and desire, caught the despatch from Maskin's hand, gave one look at his dead horse and then slipped into the water and turned for the bank.

"We're of French's Irregular Horse and Lord Roberts's advance," the horseman answered; "and we'll try some commandeering ourselves, I fancy. Here, none of that!" the foremost rider shouted as he caught sight of Ned's attempt to escape. "Up hands! boy, or I'll fire."

Ned felt the big horse of the scout dashing down upon him. Escape was impossible. He crushed the dispatch in his hand, dropped it into the stream and planting one foot upon it ground it beneath his heel. Then he threw his hands aloft in surrender. At least, he had done his duty.

"It's your move!" he said, as the horseman, with a clutch at his collar, almost flung him back into the stream. "Go easy! old fellow. I reckon we won't either of us cry at being caught. Eh, Maskin?"

CHAPTER XVII

WITH "THE SONS OF THE EMPIRE"

"LORD ROBERTS's advance! Then Bobs has come at last, has he?" cried Maskin. "That's good news."

"Not for you fellows," the leader of the scouts replied. "He'll do up Cronje so quick that you won't know you're winking."

"Well, do you suppose that we don't want to see the old Voertrekker done up?" demanded Maskin. "What do you take us for—foreign contingents of the four-colored flag? Didn't I tell you that we had been commandeered into service?"

"All right, me boy, it's the same old story," the scout retorted with the "all in my eye" look of unbelief. "Come! take the youngster on with you and ride back with us. You'll have to go double until you get to camp."

Reluctantly, in spite of his ready acquiescence, and his indignation at being counted a "youngster" Ned mounted behind Maskin and rode out of the ford and back from the line of the Modder. For though glad to be with other than his Transvaal comrades

of "commando" days, Ned still had a certain qualm of conscience as he thought of the despatches to Botha which he had ground beneath his heel in the bed of the Modder river and felt that his duty had not really been fulfilled in thus turning back upon the mission with which General Cronje had entrusted him. But Maskin had, apparently no such problem of duty troubling him; he rode back with his conductors to their outpost in so jovial a frame of mind that one would have thought it his deepest desire to get once more under the protection of the Union Jack.

Before the camp of the irregulars was reached Maskin had given them much of his own and Ned Pevear's story, and when they reported with their "prisoners" the scouts had about reached the conclusion that their capture was no capture at all but a deliverance.

The officer to whom the men reported, however, thought otherwise. It had been a capture of Boer despatch bearers, whether "commandeered" or not, and he decided that Maskin and Ned must be sent on to headquarters for examination. So, to headquarters, the "prisoners" were despatched under guard.

Headquarters, at that time, were with General French's flying column at Ramdam farm, just east

of the railway line to Cape Town. For that swift riding cavalryman, the Sheridan of the South African campaign, had there concentrated his mounted troopers and his seventy-eight guns of Field and Horse Artillery, and was preparing to make a dash upon beleaguered Kimberly and drive back the besieging Boers who, at Magersfontein, were investing the town.

Maskin was in his element when he reached Ramdam farm. The cavalry, the artillery and the irregulars that made up French's flying column suited him, so he declared, "up to the handle;" and when, brought before French, he and his comrade had told their story of adventure—how they were American fighters from the Philippines, how they had been kidnapped in Luzon and commandeered in the Transvaal—and when they had been offered service among the scouts, Maskin hesitated not a moment and Ned wavered only so long as it took to adjust his ever-constant debate with duty.

"Aw! not discharged yet from the American service, hey?" demanded General French, as the lad stated his main objection. "It looks to me as if you had discharged yourself without waiting for Uncle Sam's consent. But I can arrange that. You can join my scouts as on special service, the same as other Americans are doing. Lord Roberts is organizing a

body of American scouts for service in this hill and river country. Try a ride with my column, my lad, and get your hand in."

"He will, General," said Maskin. "I'll answer for the lad. Scouting is right in his line. We did a lot of it under General Lawton in Luzon, and we've got the inside track on the Boers here, sir. They're a good deal like the Indian and the cowboy in America—sort of a mixture of the two, I should say, and we've learned their ways, General."

Ned, half convinced already, was completely won over by General French's friendly words and Maskin's assertions.

"Obey orders, keep your eyes open, ride firm, shoot straight, dare and endure—that's all I ask of my scouts, lad," the general declared. "If you can do that, as all Americans can, I know, why, you're what I want and you can do all this without violating your allegiance to the Stars and Stripes."

And so it came to pass that Maskin and Ned Pevear were enrolled among the irregular volunteer scouts of General French's flying column rendezvoused at Ramdam farm for the dash on Kimberly.

The flying column was compounded of hard-riding "sons of the Empire," drawn from every British colony—from Canada and Australia, from New Zealand and South Africa, with "home born" troopers and artillerists, lancers and hussars, while behind the

column, came the infantry, making in all a force of ten thousand picked fighters detached by Lord Roberts for the relief of Kimberly and the trapping of Cronje.

French proposed to beat the Boer at his own game—swift marching and a Sheridan-like dash at communications, depending upon his flying column for the forward rush and the infantry contingent as a flanking force to surround and hold the enemy.

Out from Ramdam Farm, while the infantry was yet massing for the advance, French and his flying column rode in the earliest hours of a February morning, and after an hour's march halted to wait for daylight and the report of the scouts. And with the advance, among the watchful sharp-eyed scouts rode the campaigners of Luzon—Ned Pevear and Maskin.

Through all that wonderful, brilliant dash of one hundred miles in four days—from Ramdam to Kimberly—fighting and flanking the Boers, until he had swept completely around the surprised Cronje in his camp at Magersfontein, French raced on, over ford and plain, around hill and ditch, by pass and neck and stony road, until at last his splendid cavalry division galloped down from the heights beyond Magersfontein and swept across the veldt in so great a dust cloud and at so thundering a pace, that, as the watchers in beleaguered Kimberly saw the advancing cloud

of dust, they thought at first that Cronje had been reinforced and that the end had come, indeed.

They recalled the sad day after Magersfontein defeat, when Lord Methuen had been beaten by Cronje, and the jubilant burgher-besiegers had heliographed the fatal message: "We have smashed up your column." So, when again the heliograph on the kopjes beyond the veldt flashed to their eyes the message: "We are the relief column," the anxious watchers doubted the truth and feared a Boer trick.

But the dust cloud dissolved itself into galloping cavalry, well nigh spent by their fearful three days' roundabout ride, through "dust devils" that blinded and in heat that fairly "frizzled" them, with men and horses dropping by the way, and with guns dragged forward by teams well-nigh "dead-beat," or by men, as weary, who helped the horses on, until, at last all Kimberly knew the truth, and with waving flags and cheers from newfound strength, the beleaguered town hailed its deliverers, and Kimberly was relieved.

It was a great ride for Ned Pevear; it recalled the day when, as an aid to his general, he had swept along the broken roads and over the wide marshes of distant Luzon, hot-footed after the flying Filipinos; only here, a city relieved rather than a town burning and deserted welcomed the resistless advance. He said as much to Maskin.

"This like that?" exclaimed the jubilant Englishman; "why, Neddie, it's no more like that than cheese is like chalk—except that French and Lawton both mean business, and get there! Your Boer is no Gugu. He is a fighter and a stayer, he is—until we get at him and send him kiting."

"He's just as hard to see, though, and he fights behind cover just as the Filipinos do," declared Ned, "and that's where we scouts get in our fine work—uncovering him. I wonder what 'old Piet' would do to us if he caught us, Maskin?"

"Who—Cronje?" replied Maskin, "Great Jupiter! how the old lion would claw us, eh? But he won't. We're out to catch him, you see; and it's our game. Look at that! Do you think he could put any fight against those chaps?"

They stood on the conning-tower above the diamond mines of Kimberly, and Maskin pointed off to where, across the veldt, came the long line of infantry and artillery that swelled French's advance to full ten thousand men—Tommies weighed down with packs and streaming with perspiration and enthusiasm, as, before them, they saw the roofs of Kimberly, and knew that their dashing general had outwitted the wily Boer.

"'Spose Cronje can break away, Maskin?" queried Ned, weighing the chances of force against force.

"How can he? We've got him foul," Maskin declared. "Now I'm getting square for Krugersdorp. Wonder how the cornet of the commando feels just now, Neddie? He was going to chew me up for being at Krugersdorp, you know."

The cornet of the town commando and his shrewd leader, Cronje, were scarcely thinking of Maskin now. They were scheming to dodge the ten thousand Maskins who had come down upon them at Magersfontein "like a wolf on the fold." For when French carried the Riet River by storm at Dekiel's Drift, and at Klips Drift on the Modder swept back the Boer resistance with a brilliant dash, the 'old lion of the veldt," awoke to his danger, and lacking the reinforcements for which he had sent by these two American despatch-bearers (that was the one time that he thought of Maskin and Ned Pevear) he decided to make a sudden break for Magersfontein and give up his long and determined attempt on the "diamond town" of Kimberly. So, with dinners untouched and laagers scarcely stripped, he turned from Magersfontein, skilfully doubled on his tracks and outflanking his flankers raced back for Bloemfontein and safety.

But another was before him. For when French swept across the valleys of the Riet and the Modder, en route to Kimberly, Roberts with his main army struck straight for Bloemfontein, and, over river-

drifts and sand-blown wastes, concentrated at Jacobsdal. From there he pushed eastward to head off the retreat of the Boers under Cronje, who, after breaking through the English flanks by skillful management, were now trekking for dear life to Bloemfontein, eighty-five miles away.

Out from relieved Kimberly, with French and his cavalry scarce waiting for rest and almost on their heels, rode Ned and Maskin among French's picked scouts, with one eye open for the fleeing Cronje and the other watchful for some pass or drift where they could help the cavalry head off the Boer wagon line and put a stop to the "old lion's" retreat to his lair.

"If he once gets to the Modder he's got two to the good," said Maskin. "Ride ahead for all you're worth, Neddie, and see where the river lays."

Ned spurred his horse over the veldt and up a little hillock from which he could see the valley of the Modder, just beyond his outlook. As he did so he gave a shout and spurred back to the scouts faster than he came; for, stringing down to the river, far ahead, he saw a long line of moving objects which he knew full well was Cronje's retreating force, seeking to hasten their passage of the Modder at Koodoos Drift.

Back to the advance cavalry he spurred with the tidings and soon, galloping over the veldt, streamed horsemen and bumping artillery to head off the re-

treating Boers. Maneuvering would not answer now; the passage of the Modder must be a trial of speed. So, to cover the guns that had been at once unlimbered for action, over the yellow veldt to the red kopjes that commanded the river spurred the "sons of the Empire" who rode with French, the prince of trooper generals. One of the kopjes in especial commanded that ford, and at once hussar and Boer—an even two hundred of each—broke into a neck-and-neck race for the possession of that vital hill.

The wagon train of the retreating Boers was already across the stream; let them once get free of the British bombardment and the road to Bloemfontein was won; hence the struggle for the kopje that would either free or check the retreat, as Boer or Briton held it safe.

Great riders are the farmers of the Transvaal, fitted to the saddle and born to the veldt; but so, too, are the "sons of the Empire," rough-riders of prairie, valley, hill and plain. The Boers raced for the kopje as for dear life; the Hussars galloped for it as for the one thing most desired—victory. And victory was theirs; for before the Boers had reached the kopje foot, the Hussars were already plunging up the opposite side and flinging themselves from their horses—which every third trooper took in charge,—they climbed the rock-strewn hill and gaining the top,

checked the out-classed Boers with a heavy carbine fire and drove them back to the wagon train, which exposed to the fire of British guns, was forced back across the Modder. Thus was Cronje's desperate dash for liberty foiled. The "sons of the Empire" had driven the "old lion of the veldt" back to cover.

And in that wild race for position, foremost among the Hussars rode Ned Pevear the scout, the excitement of effort straining every muscle, the glory of achievement flashing in his eye.

"Kick from goal, eh, Maskin?" cried Ned, as his friend joined him from the scouts. "I tell you that was exciting, though. Ta, ta! Cronje. We'll see you later."

The "commandeering" episode, it was evident, still rankled with the young American, to whom freedom of choice was but a natural desire; while, like most Americans also, comradeship went out to those of kindred speech and kindred blood, and rejoiced in a triumph so brilliantly attempted and so dashingly won.

It fell to Ned Pevear, also, to be the bearer of the good tidings; for General French, desiring to send the commander-in-chief word that he had checked the Boer retreat bade a scout ride to the main command with the message and Ned, as the lightest was sent speeding back.

That day Lord Roberts had his headquarters at

Jacobsdal, out of which he sent his division to intercept, drive back or scatter the Boer retreat; he himself moved on toward Horse Hill, or Paardeberg, thirty miles nearer to Bloemfontein, to which "leafy capital" Cronje was endeavoring to cut his way through his encompassing foes.

For they were encompassing him now, swiftly and surely. With Kelly-Kenny's brigade straining forward to hold the position on the southeast of the Modder; with Macdonald and his Highlandmen beating back at Koodoosrand by a brilliant ride, the heels of Cronje's retreat and "remembering" the fatal day of the Black Watch at Magersfontein; with French and his cavalry just south of Macdonald turning back the Boers on the northeast of the Modder at Koodoos Drift, and with Roberts, with his main column, marching across the veldt, the position of the Boer general grew desperate. But, while despatching messenger after messenger to Botha off toward Ladysmith with demands for aid the old lion, with his ten thousand men reduced to scarcely five, drew back among the rocks and hills, south of the Modder and while awaiting reinforcements sought shelter in the entrenched river bed and behind the red boulders of Horse Hill—the fatal trap of Paardeberg.

It was in this region—beyond the Modder and

the hills at Paardeberg—that Ned Pevear, riding with the news of Koodoos Drift, came upon the main British army. Off to the north, on the hills above the river bank, could still be heard the noise of French's guns playing on the Boers as they hastily entrenched themselves; while, plucky as ever in the face of growing odds, the Boers, making laagers of their train of wagons on the southerly bank held back the British advance by their guns on nek and kopje.

Ned delivered his message to an orderly at headquarters who hastened to Lord Roberts with the welcome news of French's success, while officers of the staff and officers of the brigades, with Red Cross men, and even Tommy Atkins himself, pressed upon the messenger demanding details of his news.

Ned, jubilant and excited, as the bearer of good tidings was telling his story with his customary cheery nature, when out of the press came a voice in broken English, conveying an invitation.

"If ze courier ples; ze sirdar say, will not ze ridare have ze refreshment aftare hez ride?" so the query ran.

The listening throng, friendly and joyful, hustled the lad off to the "tiffin" that Lord Kitchener, the "sirdar" and chief of staff, had ordered for him. But as he approached the Malay staff-servant whom he now saw waiting to conduct him to the ever-wel-

come refreshment for a hungry boy, the Malay flung his hands in air, with a shout as of fear and surprise, and cried aloud in Spanish.

"*Santa Maria!* and is it thou? the dead alive again? It is the general's aid!"

There was no mistaking that voice. Ned knew it at once though he had failed to recognize in the white jacket of the staff-servant the once lordly staff officer of a distant dictator.

"Great Scott! it's the major!" he cried. "Why man! I thought you back in the Philippines long ago. What are you doing here? Your little game didn't work on us, you see. But how came you here—and in servant's clothes? I supposed General Lawton had finished up you and Aggy long ago."

The major of Aguinaldo's staff, for he it was, sure enough, had by this time recovered his equanimity and his breath.

"We meet again, senor," he said, "and amid different surroundings, eh? But what say you—Lawton? Do you not know? Have you not heard?"

"What about Lawton; what about my general?" cried Ned, hungry for tidings of his own. "Has he cleaned out Aggy and finished up the war?"

The Filipino laughed derisively.

"Cleaned out, say you?" he replied. "O, boy, it is mine who have done the cleaning. Your Gen-

eral Lawton lies dead, killed by a bullet of the republic, weeks ago at San Mateo."

"Dead! dead! My general dead, do you say?" Ned almost shrieked in wrath and incredulity. "You lie, you cur! No Filipino bullet was ever made that could kill my general. Dead, you spy?"

And with a Yankee yell, before which Filipinos had never failed to turn in terror, the boy flung himself in a frenzy of rage upon this bearer of evil tidings and fairly bore the startled major to the ground, where he hammered his black head, in an unthinking desire for vengeance, upon the sharp and cruel stones that strewed the yellow veldt.

CHAPTER XVIII

HOW THE OLD LION STOOD AT BAY

LOST to all save his revenge and despair, Ned was unconscious of his surroundings as there, in the very camp of the commanding general of the British army, he vented his rage and sorrow upon the malicious or unwise bearer of evil tidings.

Suddenly he awoke to the wrong and the unsoldierliness of his thoughtless act; the Filipino major lay still beneath the boy's quivering hands; a great rush of shame and sorrow for what he had done swept across the young American; but, even as it did so, he thought of Lawton, dead—Lawton, the resistless and the brave, the gallant soldier and the noble gentleman, killed by treacherous foemen! That thought plunged him into grief afresh and, sitting beside his prostrate enemy, the boy covered his face with his hands and fairly sobbed aloud.

A hand fell upon his shoulder; a voice, stern yet gentle in its inquiry, came to his scarcely half-hearing ears.

"What does all this mean? Brawling in camp—or what?"

Ned Pevear lifted wet eyes to the inquirer, who spoke as one in authority.

"My general, sir; he said my general was dead; and I struck him down for a liar as he laughed at me," was Ned's reply.

"Your general? What general, lad? Not French or Macdonald, surely," the officer demanded.

"Lawton, sir; he says that Lawton is dead;—the bravest and best that ever rode into fight," responded Ned, still dazed with the sad tidings and his bitter grief.

"Lawton?" the name was spoken in puzzled query. "I know no Lawton— no General Lawton in our army here. Do you, gentlemen?" the speaker asked, looking into the faces of the staff officers and regimental leaders who stood about him.

No one knew the name.

"Who is the lad, my lord? Not a Boer prisoner, is he?" one of the officers queried. "This Lawton may be one of the foreign adventurers on the other side."

"Why no! this is French's messenger, is it not?" answered "my lord."

This recalled the grief-stricken lad to his senses. "My lord," was something miles away from America and the Philippines.

He rose to his feet and saluted.

"Beg pardon, gentlemen," said Ned. "I'm

afraid I made a show of myself. This man—a Filipino major on Aguinaldo's staff whom our Americans are fighting in Luzon, told me that General Lawton, the American general—and the best and bravest of them all—was dead. I don't know what the Gugu is doing here, sir; but I think he lies —and—I—I loved General Lawton! I was one of his aids in the Luzon campaign, sir."

The boy stood silent. Then he looked, straight and in a manly fashion, into the eyes of the officer who was questioning him. What he saw was a small man, scarcely an inch above his own height, save as the big white helmet hat towered over a gray head, and shaded a pair of kindly but penetrating eyes above a clean cut, positive face, and a drooping white moustache. Khaki and cavalry boots were his only uniform, but Ned, with one glance at that face, knew that he was looking upon a man of mark.

"It's Bobs, himself, I'll bet a cookie," said the boy to himself as, again his hand went up in a salute. And "Bobs," indeed, it was—General Sir Frederick Roberts, field marshal and commander-in-chief of the British forces in South Africa.

For the life of him, Ned Pevear, broken hearted and disturbed though he was, by the tidings from Luzon and his own rash action, could not keep from his mind, as he looked at that war-bronzed, white-

moustached face, the lines already known to the Tommies in the English camp:

> "Oh, 'e's little but 'e's wise,
> 'E's a terror for 'is size,"

and again his hand went up in salute.

"Aid to the American General Lawton, eh," said Lord Roberts. "Yes, I've heard of him and of his death. A dashing, brilliant and able soldier I am told, and a great loss to the American service."

Ned's eyes filled, and his mouth quivered again.

"Then the Gugu—this Filipino," he motioned toward the prostrate major, "wasn't lying, sir? General Lawton is dead?"

"Yes, my lad; that's what I have heard," the British general said. "Killed at the head of his troops in Luzon, I believe. Am I right, Captain Waterfield? The American attache can tell you, my son, if you can find him at headquarters."

"I'm sorry I struck the fellow; but I was mad clear through, General," Ned confessed. "What will you do with me?"

"Take you back to French, I fancy," Roberts replied with a smile. "You're too hot-headed a chap to live in the same camp with this Malay. I don't understand it all—your being here and his presence here, too, as a staff servant. However, queer

comrades touch elbows in South Africa, just now. Your news from French is cheering. I forgive you this camp brawl for that; but—be careful, my lad. Discipline in camp prevents all private quarrels. I ride to French's command at once. Take a bite and then ride back with me."

The commander turned again into his tent. But Ned, ere he went for his "bite," knelt down beside the now reviving Filipino.

"I'm sorry I was so rough on you, Major," he said. "Your news cut me up badly, and—you didn't break it to me gently, you see. I beg your pardon. We're neutrals here, I suppose; so we'll let bygones be bygones. Shake."

The major pressed the boy's hand.

"I was heedless I suppose, Senor American," he said. "But you startled me and I—well, let us say no more. Things are changed, indeed, since the day we met on the cascoe in the Pasig."

"Right you are, Major," Ned responded; "but hanged if I can make it all out—your being here and all that. I'll see you later and have an explanation. I must go, now. Or, say! come with me for that tiffin. Can I do anything for you"

"You can do nothing, friend," replied the major, as the American set him on his feet, "save to keep your hands from me. They have a surprising grasp."

And so, puzzled, sad, and still much upset over this startling encounter and the Filipino's distressing news, Ned accompanied his old-time foe to the refreshments that had been prepared for "French's courier," and while eating hastily heard the major's story.

"I sailed back on the *Dom Sancho* for home," said the Filipino. "But she was stopped by a British warship before we were three miles out of Delagoa Bay and was taken as a prize to Durban for carrying contraband of war. There I was thrown on the beach with none to help me. Then my money gave out; my Portuguese friends were false to me, and, in despair, I became a camp-servant to your brothers the English. And here I am! A sad fall, my friend, for a staff officer and a peace commissioner; but what would you? One cannot be ever up in this world. I wait my time. Perhaps you can get me home."

"The same way you did me, eh?" queried Ned. "Nice trick you served us, shipping us off to the Boers with the rest of their freight. Why?"

"Ah, pardon, friend;" the Filipino flung out imploring hands. "It was that pig of a Portuguese. I would have helped you, but he feared your tongue. You knew too much."

"That's a fact, we did," laughed Ned. "Well, we know more now. Ta, ta! I'll see you later.

Coming at once, orderly. You'll forgive my roughness, eh, Major?"

"It is a trifle; see, it is forgotten;" replied the major; and Ned passed from the tent.

But, as he did so, the face of the Filipino changed; the smile of reconciliation faded from it; and, in place came the treacherous, bitter look of Malayan revenge. All was not well for Ned Pevear yet, if that vindictiveness should ever find opportunity for action.

Ned, however, saw nothing of this as he hastened to take his place in the mounted escort which was to gallop with Lord Roberts to the camp of French at Koodoos Drift.

The boy fell well in the rear of the cavalcade and was thinking of General Lawton's death and of the strange fate that had brought him and the Filipino major together once more, when an orderly clattered up to him.

"You are the scout from French's Irregulars? The general wishes to speak with you," the orderly announced; and Ned spurred forward to the general.

Lord Roberts greeted him with a kindly smile. The courtesy and friendliness of "Bobs" were among the main secrets of his popularity with army and with people, and Ned, speedily captured by

them, became only another admirer of the little hero of Kandahar.

But he became aware, too, that beneath that kindly exterior, lay the clear insight and stern judgment of an intrepid leader of men; for when Lord Roberts, interested in the story of the young American adventurer, heard what he had to say of the affair on Spion Kop and how valiantly Colonel Thornycroft fought to hold that perilous position, he shook his head doubtfully.

"Fighting is not the only requisite of a soldier, my lad," he said. "Colonel Thornycroft is a gallant leader and held that hill heroically; but there was no wisdom in his doing this alone. There was an army below him on the veldt; why didn't Thornycroft send down for reinforcements instead of stubbornly playing a lone hand and upsetting the whole plan of operations? It was a bad business and those higher even than Thornycroft shall be made to suffer for their error in judgment and their want of capacity."

The commander spoke his own thoughts aloud rather than for the boy to hear; and Ned could not help feeling that the chief was unjust to the gallant soldier; but, later, as he came to study the campaign, he saw how correct was Lord Roberts's judgment and how merited was his censure, as he learned that

assumption of responsibility by subordinate, even if brave, officers is often the wreck and ruin of the plans of longer heads and wiser brains.

The strategic little field marshal evidently did not intend that his plans to entrap General Cronje should fail through the blunders of subordinates. For when he had joined General French at Koodoos Drift he brought up more of his troops from the main column; he bade Lord Kitchener hold Cronje in his Modder river trenches and on Horse Hill, while zigzagging counter trenches toward the Boer works; he ordered up more howitzers for his ring of fire from his base of supplies at De Aar; he galloped off with French to intercept and beat back the reinforcements which Botha was hastening to Cronje's relief, and then he sent Ned galloping back to Kitchener at Paardeberg with orders to locate, by balloon, the position of the enemy's ammunition wagons and signal the gunners to destroy them.

So, back to the main camp with his orders rode Ned, where he was forthwith used by one of the "sirdar's" aids as messenger to the "cloud detectives" on service with the captive balloon, even then tugging at its leash on a near-by hill.

This way and that swayed the great, clumsy, half-inflated top, as Ned rode up with his message; at once the trained balloonists hastened to get their

big air-craft under way, and invited Ned to accompany them on their trip into the clouds. Nothing loth, the lad climbed into the car in which, beside the two signal service men was an officer of the staff from headquarters and his Malay servant. And, as the balloon rose skyward, Ned recognized the Malay servant as his old friend and foe, Aguinaldo's major.

He greeted the Filipino pleasantly and then lost himself in the contemplation of the scene below as, shooting upward, the big balloon speedily found itself a captive, anchored to the earth by a great cable at which it swayed and pulled, until Ned realized that one of his boyish dreams had come true and he knew how it seemed to be riding on a kite.

Below him, veldt and river and kopje lay spread out like a vast checker board. The staff officer and the signal men were studying the whole lay-out with their field glasses, "locating" the lair of the lion, as Cronje in his camp, gathered himself for a bold stand at bay; here were the tents and laagers of the Boers; yonder, their batteries of big and little guns; there, huddled the wagon train broken into defences and breastworks; far off on the veldt the camp herds were feeding; commandos were deploying and marching here and there; men were busily at work entrenching and fortifying the slopes of Paardeberg, or Horse Hill, as the English call it, even women

and children could dimly be descried at work on plain and hill, and the camp of Cronje showed preparation for long and stubborn resistance as, from the trenches in the stony bed of the Modder to the defences on kopje, nek and krantz, the old lion of the veldt made ready his sharpened claws and his snarling teeth where here, on Paardeberg, he proposed to stand at bay.

The staff officer with his glass was intent on locating the ammunition wagons which Lord Roberts wished to destroy.

"Have the mirror ready for me," he said to his Malay servant. "We'll try to heliograph the position, if I can once see those blooming carts."

Instinctively, Ned looked toward the heliographic mirror, and as he did so, all others being intent on their duties, he was surprised to see the Filipino major working the glass this way and that as though seeking to communicate a message to the Boers on the hill below.

The Malay did not notice Ned's glance, so intent was he on his treacherous work; in an instant the boy was beside him.

"You traitor!" he cried impulsively. "At your old tricks are you?" and he made a grab at the mirror as if to wrest it from the Filipino's hand.

Quick as a flash the Filipino turned upon the American who, darting at the mirror, had well nigh

lost his balance in the swaying balloon; and as Ned grasped the basket rim to save himself from falling the Malay grappled the boy's unsteady legs and fairly flung him between the ropes and out of the balloon.

But Ned was an athletic lad with a grip of iron; naturally, he let out a hearty yell as he felt himself going and then, holding on like grim death, he found himself literally hanging "between earth and sky," while the Filipino made a clutch at his dagger, with the intention of loosening the desperate grip of those clinging hands.

The cry of the startled boy, however, aroused and alarmed the preoccupied workers in the balloon and, before the Filipino could carry out his murderous intent and beat off the boy's hands, the "captain of the craft," as Ned called the chief aeronaut, and the staff officer sprang to the clutching hands and drew the boy in.

Terrified as well as mortified over this "incident" Ned was about to break out into bitter and wrathful charges against his treacherous foeman, when a glance at the Filipino stayed his tongue; the Malay's hands were clasped in appeal, and a pleading, penitential look was on his face.

"I'll wait a bit before I give him away," Ned decided.

"Thank you, gentlemen," said Ned, as with

mingled censure and query his rescuers dragged him into the car. "I'm a clumsy chap, I'm afraid, and haven't got any decent sea-legs for this sort of craft."

"But how did you do it? What happened?" demanded the balloonist.

"Why, this Malay man, he—nearly lost your mirror overboard," Ned explained; "and when I jumped to catch it I went too far, I reckon. You see, boys are plenty with you here, but mirrors seem scarce, and, as between me and the mirror—" here Ned shrugged his shoulders so significantly that the signal officers laughed good humoredly.

"You're a plucky one," said the chief. "Mirrors *are* scarce and that's a fact. But just measure your jump another time. You must look after that Malay of yours, Colonel. He's too free with the mirrors, I fancy. These Asiatics always do like to play with them."

So the incident was put aside for more important matters; for the staff officer had located the ammunition wagons and signalled the British batteries. The next instant the guns boomed out; the range was gradually obtained and at last, by a series of deftly landed shells, the four ammunition wagons were exploded and destroyed, and one of the commander's plans was thus promptly carried out.

Ned, however, kept clear of the Filipino. He was

certainly a dangerous neighbor in a balloon, and the American felt greatly relieved to be once more on the solid ground, instead of soaring aloft in a swinging basket, a mark for Boer sharpshooters below and near neighbor to an assassin and a traitor.

But, when he had thus reached the earth in safety, he turned upon the Filipino in wrathful inquiry.

"Now, then, Major," he demanded, dragging the Filipino away from the balloon. "What does this mean? I thought we were amigo on neutral ground."

"Leave me, or I shall do you injury, O blundering one!" said the major. "You thwart my plans; you spring upon me like a tiger; you set me at defiance and are watching and disturbing me. Is that amigo?"

"You are a spy and a traitor," burst out Ned. "I spared your life once; for, in that balloon, had I but spoken, you would have been shot without mercy. I give you fair warning. I will not save you again. So, be careful, Major. One more little thing like that up in the clouds and I'll choke you as I would any other treacherous snake."

Ned turned on his heel and left the Filipino alone. He was too angry to trust himself in further talk with this treacherous foeman; so, springing to horse, he reported at headquarters for messages to the commander-in-chief.

But the commander rode fast on the heels of the message and was, ere long, back again in the main camp, directing the tightening of that grip of steel which, encircling, closer and closer, the beleaguered Boers, held them at last firmly entrapped beyond the reach of reinforcement or relief.

And yet, so wise was that entrapped "old lion of the veldt" that of the ten thousand men and heavy guns that had made up his besieging force before Kimberly, half the men and very nearly all the guns had, by some clever strategy, slipped through the encompassing lines and were free of Paardeberg. For the lion, too, can sometimes play the fox.

But in that ring of fire and steel, caught between the bed of the Modder and the trenches on Horse Hill, the old lion stood bravely at bay. To the chivalrous offer of Lord Roberts to let the women and children pass free from the Boer camp to safety, Cronje returned a brusque No. He had use for even those "obstacles of war." For, driven closer and closer into the defences of the hills by the relentless fire of the British guns, even the women and children were kept in the trenches handling ammunition or aiding the sharpshooters who strove to pick off the British gunners at long range, and more than one English Tommy bit the dust on veldt and kopje, brought down by a Boer rifle in a woman's hand.

Gradually, however, hope died out in the stubborn

old defender at bay. Absolutely enclosed by the British lines, exposed to the fearful fire of the deadly lyddite shells, driven from the trenches in the river bed to the rock defences on the kopje, all hope of reinforcement gone, with ammunition running short and the parallels and zigzags of Kitchener's engineers coming nearer and nearer to his lines, where, at any moment, a bristling bayonet charge might leap against him, the brave old Cronje finally yielded to the inevitable and, in the dull gloom of a raw February morning—the very anniversary of the day when at Majuba hill he had, years before, forced the English to yield to his victorious arm,—the old lion of the veldt gave up the fight and unconditionally surrendered to the British commander-in-chief.

He had put up a brave defence and had yielded only to superior force and to a master of strategy. The news of the surrender came to Ned and Maskin on scouting duty far to the left, and they both felt that they were "square with Kruger" for being commandeered.

"And I'm square with old Petey, too, for the dose he gave us at Krugersdorp," said Maskin. "Every Jameson raider will give an extra cheer to know that at last we've corralled the old lion who clawed us so ferociously on that day of defeat. I'm going to see him just once more, Neddie. Will you come along?"

"I can't, Maskin," Ned replied. "My orders are to watch the lines and see that no one breaks through. Take a good look at the old lion for me too, Maskin. He's brave and I salute him as a hero, though defeated."

So Maskin rode to the camp while Ned, on patrol duty, kept watch on the surrendered lines. But as his horse picked a careful path over the loose rocks at the foot of the fallen stronghold of the Boer, the animal started back with a snort of fear and surprise, where, from behind a rock, came a great flapping of wings, and the dreaded "aasvogel"—the great vulture of the hills—rose from an interrupted meal.

Ned hated those ugly birds of prey. More than once had he fought them off from dead Englishman or dying Boer, as the vile scavenger of the South African plains swooped to its work of devastation. He clubbed his rifle and, again and again, struck out at the great bird, as, leaping from his horse, he clambered over the rock from which the vulture rose.

Then he gave a shout. For there, behind the rocks, a dead horse lying upon him—the prey of the vulture as the man, too, would speedily have been—lay his enemy the Filipino major, quite still but breathing, and with half-closed eyes. He had evidently been thrown with a broken leg, in a last desperate attempt to communicate with the Boers.

It was Ned's turn now. He remembered his

threat to the spy; so, too, evidently did the Filipino renegade. For, as his eyes met those of the American and traveled to the clubbed musket and the stern face, he felt that the game was his no longer and that his hour had come.

CHAPTER XIX

HOW MASKIN SQUARED THE ACCOUNT

"So, Major! trapped at last like your friend, Cronje, are you?" exclaimed Ned, as, his first surprise over, he leaped down beside the prostrate Filipino. "Will you never learn your lesson?"

The Filipino groaned aloud.

"Is it you, American?" he said. "Are you come to glory over my downfall? Begone, and let me die in peace."

"Won't be much peace as long as this old assassin of a vulture is around," cried Ned, striking at the persistent bird with his clubbed rifle.

For the great aasvogel, enraged at being baffled of its prey, had again swooped down upon the dead horse and the prostrate man, prepared, if need be, to do battle with this meddling American who had come to spoil its meal.

But Ned, as we know, was a persistent fellow and loathed the disgusting bird that haunted every battlefield on veldt or kopje. Again and again, as the vulture swooped to the attack, did he strike out at it with his rifle-butt, fairly standing astride his Filipino

foeman, protecting him from the determined bird of prey. At last, even as his arms were wearying with this "hand-to-wing" fight, as he called it, he unloosened the revolver in his belt and as the aasvogel swooped once again he emptied his pistol into his flapping foe and had the satisfaction to see the great bird flutter to the earth with a broken wing and a bullet through his head.

Ned sprang upon the wounded vulture and fairly "clubbed the life out of him." Then, panting and half spent with the fight he turned to the major. But all his wrath and revenge were gone now, and he could find in his heart no desire to keep his hot and hasty promise of "no quarter" to his old-time foe. Instead, he pried the body of the horse from the broken leg of the Filipino and tenderly raised him to his feet.

"There you are, Major. What! leg broken?" he said. "Oh, that's rough. Here! let me get a good hold on you," and passing an arm about the wounded man, in the semi-professional manner he had learned from Red Cross men and handy nurses, he drew the Filipino from his rocky bed and carefully placed the major on his own horse.

"Can you stand it so, Major?" he said. "Brace up now and we'll get you back to camp and the surgeon. He'll bring you 'round all right."

"And you will not give me up to punishment,

brother?" the Filipino asked,—"you, whom I sought to slay?"

"I guess you've had your dose," Ned replied. "The Dutchmen have given in anyhow, and Cronje's a prisoner; so your little work won't count. Let's forget it. One 'rassle' with that big vulture ought to be punishment enough."

"And you drove him off!" exclaimed the Filipino in wonder. "Is that an American revenge?"

"An American is no—" Gugu, Ned was about to say, but he checked himself in time—"not that kind," he declared. "He fights fair; but he doesn't turn away from even an enemy in distress."

"'Tis a new way of warfare," the Filipino said. "I would our people knew it better; but, with us, kindness and mercy too often are taken for weakness."

"You'll have to change all that, Major, if you are going to be United States," Ned declared; "and you might as well make up your mind to one fact—our folks in the Philippines are there to stay; and it will be a great day for the Filipinos when your folks once wake up to the truth. Our flag stays—and you'll be one of its best defenders, some day."

"It may be," the Filipino said, as he winced with pain from his broken leg. "My plans all go wrong; I worked for Filipino liberty; I worked for Boer freedom; and in both I have failed, while even my

THE LION OF THE VELDT.

"Ned was in time to witness the simple and pathetic surrender of Cronje the Boer to Roberts the Briton."

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foeman turns my benefactor. Believe me, brother, I will not forget it."

But Ned was not so well assured of this. The major of Aguinaldo's staff had talked like that before.

However, he conducted the Malay to the hospital, saw that he received due attention, reported the accident, without the suspected treachery, at headquarters and was in time to witness the simple and pathetic surrender of Cronje, the Boer, to Roberts, the Briton.

Fast upon the heels of Cronje's surrender came the welcome news from the east that, on the very day on which the Boer general "threw up the sponge," the army before Ladysmith had stormed and carried the strong Boer position on Pieter's Hill, and had so demoralized the enemy that the long siege of Ladysmith was "raised" in haste. For, on the following day Dundonald's cavalry galloped into the town—the Imperial Light Horse and the Natal Carbineers—and White's gallant defense had not been in vain.

"Three cheers for the queen!" cried out brave General White, as the head of the relieving column rode into exultant Ladysmith; and, when the cheers were given, sun-burned deliverers and fever-ridden defenders, all bareheaded, stood for an instant in the thronged streets of the enfranchised city and sang

at the top, alike of healthy and of famine-weakened lungs, the well known strains of the national air of England.

The news came to Ned and Maskin as, with the Irregulars, they rested after the successful flanking of the Boers at Poplar Grove where an army had been massed to check Lord Roberts's advance into the Orange Free State, and where French's cavalry had so nearly captured "their Honors" the presidents of the two republics, that as Maskin declared, he had almost trodden on Kruger's flying coat tails.

"It's the beginning of the end, I fancy, Neddie," said Maskin jubilantly, as he tossed his cap in the air in honor of White and Ladysmith. "You and I will yet eat dinner at the tavern they wouldn't give us a show at in Pretoria—the Transvaal Hotel, wasn't it? And the one who rides into the captured capital first pays for the dinner."

"Done!" cried Ned, clasping hands with his comrade to seal the bargain. "And the major shall be our invited guest."

"What! the Gugu?" cried Maskin, who evidently doubted the Filipino's "change of heart," even after Ned had told him the story of the vulture. "No, sir! You don't catch me breaking bread with that beggar. He drugged us once, and he'll do it again."

"O no! he's all right," Ned protested. "You

give me a chance, Maskin, and I'll make a good American of him, yet."

"Then it'll have to be a dead one," growled Maskin. "I tell you, I don't trust the fellow, Neddie. If you had only let me chuck him overboard the day we skipped from the proa, you wouldn't have him on your hands, now."

"No; but I'd have him on my conscience, and that's ten times worse, Maskin," declared Ned. "I do hate to hit a fellow when he's down."

"Here too!" Maskin assented; "but when he's such a low-down as your Gugu,—why! nothing is too bad for him, I say."

"You're way off, Maskin," said Ned. "The Filipino is waking up to the truth and you'll find it out, some day. You'll be glad to have him at that Pretoria dinner of ours, or I'm no prophet."

"I'm afraid prophesying isn't just in your line, Neddie," said Maskin with a laugh;" and, as for your Filipino friend, I fancy he won't get 'round in time for Pretoria. Hospital's too easy a place. Funny how I've skipped it, isn't it? For such a tired chap as I am one of those adjustable beds would be as good as that load of hay we tumbled into, up in the Transvaal. What a lot of 'speriences we've had together, eh, lad?"

"Yes, and we will have a lot more, God willing,

old chap," declared Ned, feelingly returning his comrade's friendly hand-grasp. "But as for the major, —why! he's out of the hospital already. He wasn't so badly hurt, and a week on one of those beds you envy him for, set him all right. Don't you fear. He'll be 'round for that dinner."

"Well if he is—" Maskin began. "Hullo! there goes the call," he cried, as the clear notes of "boots and saddles" rang from the camp. "Something up for us, Neddie. On to Pretoria, lad!"

Roberts was pushing on. Delaying but for a few brief hours at Paardeberg, after the surrender of Cronje, he advanced to the occupation of Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State, from which burgher metropolis the railroad stretches off to Pretoria, nearly three hundred miles to the north.

Flanking the enemy, massed at Poplar Grove—where French's cavalry did the most of the fighting —Lord Roberts turned southward toward the Bloemfontein "pike" and the cross-country railroad, while the Irregulars and scouts were sent galloping ahead to "locate" the enemy's rear-guard; for the commander-in-chief conjectured that the Boers would turn at bay somewhere near the little station of Driefontein.

Galloping in advance, Ned and Maskin discovered that Lord Roberts had read the signs aright; for, at Driefontein, they "unearthed" a strong resistance

arranged by Commandant Delarey's Boers, who, fourteen thousand strong, had made a bold stand to prevent the forward British move on Bloemfontein.

Ned was sent speeding back to French to report the trouble ahead and then rode forward again with Kelly-Kenny's division to disperse the Boer rear-guard.

Out from a cloudless sky the sun beat down hotly upon the dusty veldt; but, over the plain, careless of the heat, the advance pushed on and at last came in sight of the ring of scattered hills, or kopjes, that encircled the basin of Driefontein in which the Boers had taken their stand.

Delarey had trusted to British stubbornness to make one of the direct or "frontal" attacks which were ever disastrous to the advancing party; but Lord Roberts knew the game of war better. As he had flanked the commandos at Poplar Grove he proposed to flank them again at Driefontein. But he bade French and Kelly-Kenny hold the Boers in play until the center and left could reach them and outflank the enemy's position.

So, with French's cavalry advance, the scouts rode into action, amid the rocky kopjes of Dreifontein.

"How do you feel, Maskin? Think we're in for something warm?"

"Don't care if we are, Neddie," the long-legged scout replied. "I'm ready for it, whatever it is. Of

course I'm dead tired, as usual, Neddie," he explained; "but I'm tired of doing nothing; that's worse than being tired of doing too much. So, now, I'm out for business, I am—for fighting is my business, this trip. I remember a thing we used to shout at Rugby—it was by one of those English poet chaps—Motherwell, I think. It just fits us, Neddie, as we're off for the scout and charge."

And Maskin, with the strength of voice that made even his assumed laziness seem alive, tossed his rifle in air and caught it, as the troubadour of old used to ride singing into battle, while he "spouted" Motherwell's stirring lines:

> "Then mount! then mount! brave gallants, all,
> And don your helms amain:
> Death's couriers, Fame and Honor, call
> Us to the field again.
> No shrewish tear shall fill our eye
> When the sword-hilt's in our hand—
> Heart whole we'll part and no whit sigh
> For the fairest of the land;
> Let piping swain and craven wight,
> Thus weep and, puling, cry;
> Our business is like men to fight,
> And hero-like to die!"

And with the song of his fighting forefathers on his lips the free-lance of to-day rode forward into battle.

The opposing forces were soon in action. Artillery from the British light batteries played upon the

Boer trenches, while, from their strong position on nek and kopje, the burgher guns paid their compliments to the British visitors.

"It bids fair to be a neat little fight," Maskin declared, as from his vantage ground on a rise to the left he studied the gathering force. "Hey! see there, Neddie! The Welsh are going in with cold steel. They're going to storm that kopje. Hurrah for Taffy! Long live the leek! That's what I call pluck."

It was, indeed. To turn one strong position on the stony ridge and weaken the strength of the enemy's flank, the Welshmen were ordered to the charge, and to rush the Boer position on a well-held kopje.

But the ridge or nek that connected the ring of kopjes was more determinedly held and skillfully entrenched than the British leader imagined; down the broken slope rang out the fire of the defenders, and the brave Welshmen staggered back only to be reinforced, however, by the boys of Essex, who stormed up the hill behind them.

"That settles it!" cried Ned. "They can't stand that double attack. Hullo! see there, Maskin; there's a white flag! By George! they're going to surrender, and we're making 'em."

It looked so, indeed. The Boer fire slackened as the white flag fluttered out; the British stormers

checked their fierce advance, and as Ned and Maskin swung around from left to right to announce the flag of truce and silence the British fire, Maskin cried out in surprise, "Eh, Oh! Neddie the prophet; look yonder!"

Ned followed the pointed finger of his friend, and saw galloping across the veldt towards the British lines one of the aids of General Roberts, and, almost at his heels, the white figure of a staff-servant on a fleet pony. It was the major of Aguinaldo's staff, made whole and in service again.

Ned gave the Filipino a wave of the hand in greeting as they crossed each other's path. But the aid sung out in query, "Where's Kelly-Kenny, my lad? I have word from Lord Roberts."

Ned pointed to the right, where the division flags were fluttering.

"He's there, sir," he replied. "We're riding to him with news. The Boers have shown a white flag."

"Good! I'll report that, and save you the trip," the aid replied. "Stay here with the troopers until I return," he said to his Malay—the ex-major.

The scouts dropped back to ride to position, and Ned said, "Come along with us, Major. We've got to be on hand at the give-in."

The three rode forward towards the firing line, now silent under the promise of the white flag. But

Maskin was eyeing the Filipino doubtfully, and the major himself seemed ill at ease.

Suddenly, out from the rock defences on the hill-slope, where the British troops stood massed a bit, checked by the white flag, rang out a volley from murderous Mausers trained on the inactive Britons. The Boers had disregarded their own white flag in their over-anxiety to get the attacking British into a trap.

"Shame!" cried Maskin. "That's a Filipino trick. Is there no decency anywhere? You blasted Gugu! I'll bet you decoyed us; this is some more of your dirty work."

"Liar and renegade," burst out the enraged Filipino. "You shall eat your words! I owe you one for Malolos!" and he snapped his pistol full in Maskin's face.

But Ned, startled though he was by the act of Boer treachery, still had his eyes upon his illy-assorted comrades and so swiftly struck up the Filipino pistol that it exploded harmlessly in the air.

"You idiot!" he cried; "how dare you fire on Maskin? Can you never be friends?"

Just then the entrapped and betrayed British advance, staggering under the perfidious fusillade, came tumbling down the hill, and after them, leaping from the trenches, poured a stream of Boers, harassing their flight.

Caught in the melee the hostile three at the foot of the kopje were swept away in the rush, and, as they struggled on, came face to face with the pursuing Boers. And both Maskin and Ned recognized them as part of the Pretoria commando, led on by their old friend, the cornet.

Recognition was mutual.

"Ha! vile deserters. We meet again. Down with 'em, brothers!" cried the cornet.

One of the retreating Essex men, struck down by a Boer bullet, staggered and fell, the colors which he carried dropping from his hands. Maskin leaped from his horse and, catching at the drooping flag, dashed the staff full in the cornet's face, while, as the Boer fell, Ned, too, leaped to the ground and, pistol in hand, stood above the overthrown cornet, whose men, madly rushing on in the pursuit, had left him practically alone.

The Filipino major, still enraged at Maskin's charge of treachery, sprang at him with his ready dagger, but Maskin warded off the stroke with the color staff, and thus, for an instant, the four foemen —Briton and Boer, Filipino and American—faced one another in the fury of fight: the pause before the final spring.

Even as Ned turned to shout to the murderous Filipino the Boer cornet struggled to his feet.

"Let Maskin alone, Major," shouted Ned.

"Show your loyalty to us, man,—if you are loyal. Here are our foes in front."

"Let me get at the Gugu, Neddie," cried Maskin. "I'll stop his fun."

Ned thrust his friend aside and confronted the cornet.

"That was a mean trick of yours, sir," he said. "Only a barbarian disregards the flag of truce."

"'Twas none of my doing, boy," replied the cornet. "We fight fair and face to face. But I hold no faith with deserters. To me, Malay! We'll end these fellows now."

He drew his pistol and discharged it full at Ned who faced him, practically unarmed, for the boy's rifle was empty. But, before the bullet sped from the Boer's pistol, the Filipino sprang in front of the young American and, the next moment, fell to the ground his shoulder shattered by the Boer's bullet.

"By George! he saved my life, Maskin," cried Ned, springing across the fallen Filipino where, clubbing his rifle, even as he had lifted it against the vulture, he brought it down with a crash upon the cornet's head.

"I saw it, Neddie. By the Jumping Jupiter! the fellow's a trump, after all. Major, I beg your pardon," and he lifted the wounded Filipino to his feet.

Just then, the British, recovering from the unex-

pected and destructive attack, rallied, faced about, and swept the Boers before them up the hill. The four combatants were again caught in the returning rush, and the wounded men were well nigh trampled under foot. But Maskin caught the Filipino in his arms and bore him from the crush, while Ned, stooping, dragged the cornet to his feet and away from the danger line.

"I'll save my prisoner, anyhow," he said.

But the danger line had only shifted. Even as Maskin, with the Filipino in his arms, tried to place the wounded man upon his horse to bear him away to safety, the Boer fire rattled about their ears.

"Scatter, Maskin! it's getting too hot here," cried Ned, dropping the still senseless cornet.

"Got to look out for your friend, Neddie. I can't desert him," Maskin replied.

As he spoke there came another fusillade from the retreating Boers, now turning for the shelter of their trenches, and Maskin, fearing for the man he sought to save, sprang before the wounded Filipino as if to shield him from harm.

It was his last gallant deed. A stinging Mauser ball pierced the good Samaritan's breast and, as the recovering Essex men with the Welshmen in the advance, swept past them on their desperate bayonet charge upon the trenches, the brave free-lance fell to

the earth, the colors of his queen covering both him and the man whose life he had saved.

Ned gave a despairing cry of grief and loss.

"Oh, Maskin! What did you do that for?" he demanded as he knelt by his friend, the tears streaming down his cheeks.

Maskin pressed his young friend's hand.

"He saved your life, Neddie. I couldn't let him be shot," he said. "Who'd have thought it? He's a plucky little beggar, after all. I saved the flag, too, eh? Take it back to the boys."

His breath failed; his words came low and broken. He lifted himself just an instant.

"Good-by! Neddie," he said. "Here's the end. I fancy that is the only way I'll see home and mother, after all."

And so he died; a smile upon his lips; his hand clasping that of his comrade and friend.

CHAPTER XX

IN CAPTURED BLOEMFONTEIN

THE battle swept past them. The kopjes were won. The Boers retreated in haste from the trenches they had so stubbornly held, and down from the ridges and into the basin where stood Driefontein, wound the main army of Lord Roberts, horse, foot, artillery and transport train.

But as the returning troops came down the hill, victorious and jubilant, they picked up the little group at the foot, and dead Englishman, wounded Filipino and stricken Boer were carried back from the fatal firing line, with Ned Pevear, almost dazed over his sudden loss.

The wounded men were left at the field hospital, where Red Cross and brigade surgeons were working like beavers, seeking to save life and limb; for that "affair" at Driefontein, thanks to the fatal "mistake"—if it was not something more criminal—of the disgraced white flag, had made a British loss of over four hundred in killed and wounded, and the hospital staff was busy. But Ned would not leave his dead friend.

Out from the farmhouse in the Driefontein basin, where Lord Roberts had made his headquarters, the field marshal rode to investigate the abuse of the flag, and to follow with his field glasses the flight of the Boers, across the Driefontein ridges.

"They will fight the ground, inch by inch," he said. "We'll find them entrenched again further on, I fancy. What's the trouble? Wounded, my lad? Let someone help this boy to the hospital."

The "boy" raised sad eyes to the kindly general.

"I have no need of the hospital, General," he said, laying aside the hand of his dead friend and saluting as he rose to his feet. "But, O sir! Maskin is dead. He was my bunkie, here and in the Philippines."

"Your bunkie? Why, it's the American scout. And what is a 'bunkie', my son?" the general queried.

"My matey, sir, as your men call it," Ned replied; "my friend, my dear comrade. Shot down when those Dutchmen violated their white flag."

"Ah, lad! What of that? Let me hear your story," Lord Roberts said.

And Ned told his tale.

"It accords with the report already given me," the commander said. "It is an act of barbarism, and it has happened just once too often. Rest assured, I will protest and more. If such an abuse of the rules of civilized warfare occurs again, Captain Water-

field," he said to one of his staff, "I shall see to it, repugnant as it will be to me, that the white flags of the enemy are hereafter disregarded. I will not have my men murdered. But come, my lad, the dead are dead; the living have duties. I will see that your friend has honorable burial, wrapped in the flag he fought under and saved from disgrace. Ride to General French and beg him, with my compliments, to follow the retreat and advise me where the enemy next mass for resistance."

One last look Ned gave to the silent Maskin, as, covered with the flag, the tireless tired one who at last had found rest, was borne to his place of burial. Then the lad sprang to the saddle, and, sad at heart, but earnest to fulfil his duties, spurred on to overtake the flying column of French, the cavalyman.

He sadly missed his comrade of tramp and scout, whose experiences had been so valuable and whose advice and suggestions had been so helpful to him. He recalled the days and months of companionship since first, beside the Quaker guns of Baliuag in the far-off isle of Luzon, he had met Maskin, the Anglo-American, the free-lance, the "gentleman in masquerade," the daring soldier, the bold fighter, the true friend.

"Ah well! I don't know how I shall get along without him," Ned declared; "but—it's the fortune

of war, I suppose. I hate war, though, when it takes off friends like Maskin."

So, trying to be philosophic while really sorely sick at heart, Ned pressed forward, skirting the Bloemfontein railroad and fording the Kaal Spruit, until, at last, he came upon the cavalry advance and learned from the general that the Boers were massing just east of Aasvogel Kop, or "Vulture Hill," prepared to dispute again the British advance on Bloemfontein.

Back to headquarters at Driefontein galloped Ned to report to Lord Roberts the new action of the enemy and beg for further orders. The lad felt that he must be kept busy if he wished to forget his sorrow over the death of his friend.

He found the Filipino a sorely wounded man; for, with a new hurt following so closely upon the old one, even the Malay constitution did not swiftly recover itself; but Ned had a cheery word and a kindly smile for the brown sufferer, even while wondering if the saving of this uncertain and inconstant life were worth the price of Maskin's sacrifice. He learned, too, that he had a prisoner to his credit, and that the cornet of the Boer commando, whose head he had broken, was progressing favorably and would soon be sent to Cape Town or St. Helena to await the close of the war or an exchange of prisoners.

But Ned could not longer remain at headquarters.

Indeed, headquarters themselves did not long "stay put;" for, with his accustomed celerity and with a strategy learned from long experience in border war, Lord Roberts again did the unexpected, and instead of flinging his army into the frontal attack, which the Boers looked for, against their entrenched kopjes at Vulture Hill, he turned swiftly to the south and, following the line of Kaal Spruit, crossed the railway, and by a forced march, with the pipes of Macdonald's Highlanders "skirling" their shrillest, with French's cavalry far in advance and the "sons of the Empire" touching elbows with the men of the homeland counties, the British army halted but once, at Venter's Vlei, and then, when French had seized the railway and cleared the path, the victorious field marshal rode at last into captured Bloemfontein and this triumphant march on the Free State capital was but another feather in the cap of this master of strategy and tactics—a fitting pendant to that historic march to Kandahar, which gave to "Bobs Bahadur" his popularity and his fame.

With French's Irregulars Ned Pevear rode in the cavalry advance eighteen miles ahead of the infantry column. He was in the dash that "commandeered" the railway running south from Bloemfontein, and that then, swinging around to the north, seized the heights commanding the town, cut the

telegraph wires and tore up the rails of the iron road that ran northward to Pretoria.

In all this brilliant work, however, there had been notable resistance on the part of the Boer defenders. Surprised and startled by French's rough riding and by Roberts's restless advance, the burghers, nevertheless, persistently opposed the British invaders and, even while they fell back, fought on continually.

The Free State defenders, however, were forced to bow to the inevitable and flee from their capital in the far-stretching veldt. The British "rookineks" filed into the hill-guarded town, and, marching through its wide streets, halted in its broad square, confiscated its executive mansion and government house, garrisoned the dismantled forts on its northwest kopjes and ran up, in place of the yellow flag of the Free State burghers, the Union Jack of England.

Thirty thousand British troops were quartered in and about the "flowery, leafy capital;" more thousands were coming, and the "residency," or home of the "late president" and absent chief executive, was now occupied as headquarters by Lord Roberts with his staff—so many dukes and lords scratching away with pens on orders and reports that Ned declared it looked like the whole British peerage studying penmanship. From here the general di-

rected the movements of the Army of Occupation, whose next service was to be in the same field of strategy and tactics in a campaign to secure Pretoria in the Transvaal even as it had reduced Bloemfontein in the Orange Free State.

The town was filled with Tommies, jubilant, enthusiastic, good humored and full of fun—" seventy thousand Maskins," so Ned declared—and yet never the real Maskin to chaff and joke and " hike " with, more, he added sadly. There were plenty of English folks, too, residents of that prairie city of bowers and gardens, who had gone through the terrors of Boer " discipline " in the early stages of the war, when all British sympathisers were black-listed, bombarded with white feathers because they would not fight for the Dutch republics, or threatened, if they dared wave a farewell to the British prisoners " entrained " for Pretoria.

And there were hospitals, too, filled with sick and wounded—the " poor fighting men broke in our wars;" there were all the sights of misery and sadness as well as of jubilee and triumph among the lights and shadows of a conquered capital, where the sullenness of the defeated mingled with the high spirits of the victors, and Free State " buttons " on the breast or coat-lapels of the defiant ones, raised the wrath of many a Tommy and led to arguments of tongue or fist.

Ned was assigned to duty as a mounted orderly at headquarters, but somehow the spirits of the lad were dashed; he felt like one not of the household; his enthusiasm, high at first for this crowning triumph of Lord Roberts and his fighting men, gave way to a sorrow and almost to a sympathy for the fugitive burghers, driven from their homes in veldt and town, as he wondered how he, too, would have felt had his own wide-reaching acres of Montana prairie and ranch-land been occupied by a "foreign foe," and if the debatable questions of "burghers' rights" and alien demands had wasted his homeland and forced his own people into war.

In fact, for the first time, the boy was growing homesick. How much of this was due to the absence of Maskin's cheery presence and his feeling that he should never see his friend again he did not know; but he did feel uncomfortable and out of place, and, when one day, he stepped into a shop on Market Square only to be told by the plucky Boer shop girl that she did not wait on British soldiers, he felt all the sting of a wounded pride and a misunderstood nationality.

"But I am not British," he assured the shop girl in his most careful Dutch. "I am American."

"In that dress?" queried the girl, pointing a scornful finger at the scout's khaki suit. "I will not believe it. America, they all tell me, fought Eng-

land for liberty and won it. How can an American fight with the rookineks to destroy our liberties? You are a renegade."

Ned knew that argument was of no avail; the facts were against him even if the principle was wrong. He knew that, though England had both right and justice on her side in this bitter Transvaal quarrel, no patriotic Boer would admit it, or be friendly toward those who were helping to "deprive the Africanders of their liberties."

So he grew still more discontented, and, at last, decided to apply at once for occupation at the front, out on the firing line, from which, the noise of distant battle came, muffled but recognized, to the ears of conquered Bloemfontein as, off towards Brandfort and Thabanchu, Boer and Briton exchanged the noisy compliments of war.

Ned always believed in going to the fountain head for facts and orders, and, as he was on duty at headquarters, he believed that Lord Roberts himself was the man to whom he must apply for permission to go to the front—perhaps, even, for permission to go home.

He entered the ample residency, where secretaries were at work in the reception room, soldier clerks ticking away at typewriters in the big dining-room and "lords and gentlemen" making a workshop of the great ball-room.

There, as he was about to apply for permission for his interview with Lord Roberts, he came upon his own cavalry general—French, the indomitable fighter. Ned hesitated as the great general greeted him. Homesickness and distress over the death of comrades can never be allowed to interfere with the duty of a soldier when war is afoot, and this Ned Pevear well knew. But he told the general the truth.

"Why, my lad," said General French, looking fairly "through" his "Irregular American boy," (as he had a way of referring to Ned) when he had learned the reason of his long face,—something unusual with Ned—"why, my lad, how could victory ever come to an army if the soldiers gave way to doleful dumps? I never stop to consider the losses I have known or I should be scared off from the successes we're riding after."

"Have you known so many losses, General?" queried Ned, as he looked into the face of this dashing rider, who, he had come to believe, never knew defeat.

"Many, my boy!" exclaimed the general, "why, listen to me. Of a hundred men with whom I studied for the service—officers all, of course—seventy-five are dead to-day; fifteen from sickness and disease; sixty of them wounded by bullet or spear. Seventy-five out of a hundred, my lad! and

yet when one of your friends gets his final discharge you go about pulling as long a face as if you were a Transvaal refugee—and I don't know who can pull longer ones."

"But why shouldn't they, sir?" queried Ned. "Think of all they've lost."

"Think of it?" cried the general, "Heavens! lad; they don't let me think of anything else; their faces are as cloudy as a dust storm; and they shed tears enough to water the veldt. Long faces and weary weeps don't mend matters. Why don't they pitch in and do something? Why don't they start out a regiment of rough riders, like the fellows your Colonel Roosevelt recruited in the American war with Spain? Why don't they make up a battalion of volunteers and fight for their rights instead of groaning over their losses? Here we are, an army of fighters, sent down here because these Transvaal Outlanders couldn't manage their own business; and they're perfectly willing to let us die for 'em and never turn a hair. All they think of is their own inconvenience, when our success, which means broken heads and limping legs or loss of life for us, means for them more money and better chances for getting rich. I'm afraid my sympathy don't go out towards so many of these refugees as much as it does,—well, to you, my lad, for instance, who have lost a good friend, as the Queen has an able scout."

From all of which it may be conjectured that the dashing fighter was a bit "disgruntled" over the attitude of the very men and money-getters in whose behalf the Queen's "Tommies" and "Jackies" were spilling good blood on veldt and kopje.

"I'll tell you what, lad," continued the general, "you drop this headquarters detail for a while and come into the field with me. You need to be rattled up or you'll ride rusty. 'On to Pretoria!' That's the cry! Come back to your billet in the Irregulars again and we'll wake you up."

Ned was stirred to action by the words of the restless rider, and, at the general's own desire, he was ordered back to his command and rode off with the cavalry when, for the purpose of brushing away the Boers who blocked the relief of Mafeking and held the road to Pretoria, the flying column was launched against the laagers and trenches and defences of the burghers at Brandfort and Windberg and Thabanchu.

They could do little more than harass and hold off for a while, however, for Lord Roberts's triumphant advance was seriously retarded by the crippling of his transport service and the weakening of his cavalry divisions, because of the serious lack of horses and mules in a land where a horse was almost the first necessity.

Ned could not help recalling the harsh judgment

of American objectors and foreign critics during the short war with Spain waged by the great republic, when the transport system was so derided and attacked.

"Well!" he decided, in his customary direct way, "there are others!"

But in that season of waiting and preparation, while Lord Roberts, at Bloemfontein, was pushing forward his plans for strengthening his transport system and scouring the world for horses and mules for his army before setting out upon the forward move that was, in time, to relieve Mafeking, cross the Vet and the Vaal, capture Kroonstadt without a blow and carry the war into the seat of all opposition—the South African Republic beyond the Vaal—there were many minor operations at the front, in which Ned Pevear and French's Irregulars were kept active enough to stir up any sluggish blood, grown stagnant by inaction, repining or homesickness.

In one of these "affairs" Ned nearly made a second unwilling trip to Pretoria; for, as he waited for orders one day in the cavalry camp, where the road to Brandfort crosses the Modder, certain reckless officers of the Grenadiers proposed a little "sniping expedition" across the river towards the Boer outposts.

"It is better than stalking lions," one of the offi-

cers declared; "and it will teach some of these beggars that we're as good sharpshooters as they are. Here! we'll commandeer this cavalry scout to give us the tip, eh? Will you go along, my lad, and help us to get a catch at the Boers?"

Now Ned, being off duty, was perfectly willing to "see fun" and without further ado, accepted the "commandeering" without a question. So, the four Grenadier officers and the one cavalry scout crossed the river and made for the nearest kopje, whereon they proposed to ambush themselves, after the manner of Boer sharpshooters, behind convenient rocks on the hill and then proceed to pick off, or "snipe" as the word was, the nearest Boer pickets on "sentry go" beyond the hill.

But on such an expedition it is always best to look before you leap; and this the Grenadiers, "out for a lark," finally decided to do.

"An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure" one of them remarked? "It's just as well to reconnoitre before we climb the hill. Just ride ahead, lad, and see how the land lies," he said to the scout.

Always willing to co-operate and skilled by careful and continuous service, Ned picked his way up the slope; but, as he did so, *Crack!* came a greeting above his head and with a hasty look of investigation he swept the heights above him only to see, confront-

ing him, not thirty yards ahead, the muzzles of a half dozen Boer rifles peeping over the rocks.

Without waiting for further information he whirled about and galloped down the hill, a target for the hostile rifles.

"Somebody before us, eh?" demanded one of the Grenadiers, as Ned came galloping down, his hand waving in warning. "Are you hit, lad?"

"No, sir; but it was a close call," Ned replied. "Better not try it."

"What! turn tail in the face of those zarps!" cried the guardsman. "You don't know us, Mr. Scout. What do you say, boys! Let's rush the kopje."

"But you have no rifles with you, gentlemen," said Ned. "You can't rush them with nothing but your revolvers."

"Can't, hey! You watch us do it," came the reckless reply. And, before Ned could enter further protest, the foolhardy guardsmen were climbing the kopje on foot, covering themselves in good scout fashion behind the big rocks in the upward path, while Ned, still mounted and rifle in hand, followed slowly behind, as rear guard and "mounted escort."

Again the Boer welcome cracked out from behind the rocks.

"All ready, fellows! That's the rock!" cried the Grenadier in the lead. "Now rush 'em!"

Ned's rifle rang out as a "cover," as the four officers dashed up the hill, and the four revolvers in the hands of the guards came as an echo of his longer shot.

But he gave a shout of dismay as, almost out of the earth at his feet, so it seemed, armed men sprang up and in the next instant he and the guards were surrounded by at least twenty ambushed Boers.

"Surrender!" they shouted. "Surrender! red necks, or we fire."

The four Grenadiers, realizing that they were trapped, but resolved to die hard, stood, back to back, and faced their encircling foes.

"It's no use, gentlemen," declared Ned, taking in the situation at a glance. "They've got the drop on us. Can't you break through?"

"Where'll we break for, lad," demanded the leader of the "crippled lark."

"I'll try for a lead," replied Ned, who knew the abilities of his horse. "Follow me!"

Almost without warning, he struck spurs into his horse.

"Hey, hip! rise to it, boy!" he cried! "Now! over you go!" and the well-trained horse, schooled to his master's intention, with a mad gallop dashed down the hill, and rising suddenly in the air, with a great leap sprang full and fairly over the heads of the astonished and scattering Boers, while

Ned, with clubbed rifle, struck out to the right and left.

He had, with wise intent and ready eye, selected the only level bit of ground on that hill slope for his feat and his horse landed without a stumble.

"Come on; come on!" he shouted. "Here's the break."

"We're after you, lad," came the response from the encircled Grenadiers and straight at the gap left by the discomfited Boers they dashed for escape.

But the flank of the trappers, unbroken by Ned's great leap, sprang after the Grenadiers, and, in the neck-and-neck race for the river, outdistanced, closed about them and "gathered them in" without waste of time; and when Ned reached the river bank he saw, as he faced about, that he alone had escaped and that the four Grenadier officers had found an unexpected end to their "sniping party" and were now departing Pretoria-wards, sadder and wiser men.

General French was angry, disgusted and disturbed.

"Of all foolhardy, reckless, unnecessary and childish things," he declared, "that caps the climax. What were those fellows thinking of? To go sniping for Boers in their own preserves, with nothing but their revolvers as weapons, and then deliberately to rush a Boer kopje held by rifle-wielding zarps! By Jupiter! I never heard anything like it. If it

wasn't for their families I should say it served them right? I wonder what Lord Roberts will say?"

What Lord Roberts did say when he learned of that reckless and foolhardy business was to refer to it in the guarded language of an official report as "an unfortunate occurrence." And that was strong language for "Bobs." It meant a good deal.

As for Ned Pevear he did not feel that it was really a feather in his cap to be mixed up with an affair that set the army to laughing in spite of the "unfortunate" ending.

General French said as much to him.

"I thought I could trust you for better judgment, sir," he said to Ned. "Our officers never can seem to adapt themselves to the peculiar conditions of this war and of Boer tactics. But I did suppose one of my American scouts knew better than to go sniping with revolvers."

"But I had my rifle, General; and my horse," Ned explained. "I tried to get them out safe."

"And only got yourself out," the general said, significantly. "If you had brought them out safe I could have recommended you for the V. C. As it is I can only give you a reprimand. For a soldier to deliberately throw away his life is not bravery—it's sheer foolishness; it's criminal. Another escapade like that and I'll send you back to headquarters for sentry duty. It will be the only way to keep

your bones whole. See that you are more careful, sir."

Ned saluted and retired, greatly cast down.

"Why under the sun didn't I stay and bring them away?" he said. "It would have been the thing to do even if those zarps had winged me or sent me to Pretoria, too. So much for trying to do what people ask you to."

Clearly, he decided, he must do something to retrieve this semi-disgrace into which, for all his daring feat in horsemanship, he seemed to have fallen; so he watched for his opportunity.

It came at last. The war of outposts and firing lines into which "operations at the front" for a while resolved themselves took also the form of artillery duels between ridge and ridge as the Maxims and big guns of both armies flung shot and shell across the intervale, through which flowed the Modder River spanned only by a bridge which both sides wished to control.

The Boers, however, seemed to be getting the best in this rivalry; for, under cover of their guns, their engineers secured the advantage at the bridge, which they at once proceeded to make the most of by attempting the destruction of the bridge, thus rendering it useless to the British.

For two days the plucky Boers kept at their work of destruction, undaunted by the shells from the

British artillery. Their mines were duly bored and charged with dynamite, while every attack and every attempt of the British to cross the river were beaten back by the burghers who supported the engineers; and, in the British camp, officers and men chafed under the apparent success of the enemy.

"Why in the dickens don't some of you fellows put a stop to the business?" exclaimed a young lieutenant of the Derbyshires—a new man at the front, "for a ha'penny and a half I'd cut in and cut out the work of those Dutchmen, if I only had some one to stave them off while I did so, don't you know."

The mess laughed incredulously. "That's just the talk we always hear from rookies," they said. "After you've been here a bit, my boy, you won't try any such sniping larks. You'd get jugged as those Grenadiers were who tried to rush the kopje yonder with their pistols and a scout escort of one."

Ned overheard this remark, and again the disgrace called for retrieving.

"I'll help you, sir," he said quietly to the young lieutenant.

The Derbyshire man looked at the American and read "business" in his eyes.

"Done!" he said grasping his hand. "Let me study it up a bit and we'll make a try for it."

That very afternoon he summoned Ned.

"I've applied for permission, lad, and got it.

Our batteries will play double service in an hour, and then we'll try a dash. Do you know anything about this dynamite business?"

"No, sir," Ned replied; "but I can do as I am told."

"All we've got to do is cut the wires," explained the lieutenant of the Derbyshires. "That breaks the connection, you know, and then they can't explode the mine."

"That's all, eh?" was Ned's comment. "It's enough; but we'll try. See here, sir; can't I swim across and locate the Boer outpost so as to make sure that we shall not have a fight in hand? If the coast is clear, I'll signal you."

"Good idea," exclaimed the lieutenant. "I'll sneak over when you say the coast is clear;" and the two young fellows, stripped to their work, went off on their desperate errand.

"I wonder if the general thinks this is criminal?" Ned asked himself. "I don't care; I'll win or die."

The Modder is scarce a hundred feet wide at that point—unless the freshets are on; and Ned, good waterman as he was, struck boldly across the stream.

The British batteries kept up an incessant fire; the Boer guns replied and one or two of the shells plunged dangerously near to the swimmer and churned the water into geysers. But the boy kept on undismayed, and was soon on the further side. For

such objects as a swimming boy or one crawling across a bridge were not readily distinguished three miles away.

Stealthily and cautiously Ned crept up the bank and reconnoitered. The Boer pickets had been withdrawn during the artillery duel and the engineers had retired to adjust their mine wires to their home battery.

"The coast is clear!" signalled Ned to the lieutenant who was already cautiously making his way across the bridge.

Ned watched him breathlessly. Step by step, from girder to girder the young Derbyshire lieutenant crouched, crawled and pulled himself along, until he was fairly over and had very nearly reached the mine borings, fully charged with the deadly dynamite.

Screened by bushes but with his eyes wandering from the lieutenant to the landscape, Ned kept his watch. His heart beat high as he saw the young lieutenant draw nearer and nearer to the goal. Then his heart almost stopped; for, carefully approaching his ambush, well towards the river so as to avoid the rain of shot and shell, he saw an armed patrol of the Boers.

"Cut! cut it, lieutenant! Cut and run!" he cried. "They're on us."

The Boers sprang back in surprise. Fast on his words of warning Ned "let out" the liveliest Amer-

ican yell he could muster—a reminder of his Filipino days—and shaking his pistol aloft, sprang from his ambush.

"Surrender! surrender!" he cried. "Come on boys, we'll corral the whole outfit!"

CHAPTER XXI

WHY THE GENERAL APOLOGIZED

THERE is a good deal of boy in one active Western American, out to make the most of himself.

Evidently the Boers thought so, too, for, taken entirely by surprise, they fell back at Ned's approach, as if the whole British army were charging upon them.

"Hands up; hands up, or I'll fire," Ned shouted, in Dutch. "Drop your guns or I'll order my whole detachment to fire on you."

Behind the bush those surprised Boers supposed a big detachment of "rookineks" must be lying in ambush, only waiting the word of this energetic young officer to mow them down with a murderous fire.

Down went their guns; up went their hands.

"Quarter," they cried. "We surrender, Englishman!"

"Lieutenant!" cried Ned to the Derbyshire man, "hurry down here, if you are through with that wire."

Then to the Boers, he said, in his best Dutch, "Gentlemen, I cannot order my detail out here; we should make too good a target for your batteries yonder on the hills. But, —" here he heard the lieutenant's steps behind him, "the lieutenant will assume charge."

"What's all this, lad?" demanded the breathless lieutenant facing the disarmed Boers in astonishment.

"Prisoners, sir," said Ned saluting. "If you will conduct them across, I'll follow on with their arms. Did you cut the wires all right sir?"

"All right, you plucky young beggar," replied the gleeful lieutenant. "That bridge'll stay a while. But this does take the cake!" he added, with an "annexed" Americanism, naturalized in England. "How'll we get 'em across."

"The bridge?" suggested Ned.

"Fire's too hot. Will they swim?" said the lieutenant.

"They must, if you can, sir. Can you?"

"Like a duck, lad," the lieutenant replied.

"Lead on; I'll tell 'em our detail has drawn a bead on 'em," said Ned.

He addressed the prisoners in the tongue they understood.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you are our prisoners; but I trust to your honor. The bridge is too dan-

gerous for you to cross in this artillery fire, and I would not willingly expose you. We must swim across to our lines. I will order our detail on this side not to molest you, if you will give your word not to try to escape, but to swim peacefully across as our lieutenant leads. I will follow you; but remember, there are guns behind you; and at the first attempt on your part to escape I shall consider that you have violated your word and shall order my detail to show no mercy."

The Boers promised solemnly. They still supposed the bush to be full of British guns.

Ned explained to the lieutenant what he had done.

The officer kept a solemn face, but he gave an inward chuckle.

"My eye! but you're a oner, lad," he said. "But where's the detail; and where are the guns in the rear?"

"You and I must do for the detail," replied Ned; "and as for guns in the rear,—why! sir, I'm swimming over with 'em as rearguard."

The lieutenant simply had to adjust the buckles on his "spatters" to hide his laugh. But as he rose again his face was determined.

"Ready, corporal?" he said to Ned. Then he waved his revolver in command. "Attention! march!" he cried.

The burghers understood the tone if not the words

and followed the lieutenant down to the river bed. Then, without a word they marched into the stream.

"Remember your promise, prisoners," cried Ned. "One movement to escape and all the guns of the detachment will be after you."

Ned did some fancy swimming that day; for the current of the Modder is strong and to hold aloft four guns with one hand, while keeping stroke with the other is not easy even for a professional. But he and his comrade won the further shore in safety, where they were fairly dragged out of the water by the lieutenant's Derbyshire men who dashed in to receive and relieve their lieutenant.

"Take the guns, boys; I'm about played out," panted Ned, as the relief swam out to him.

They touched bottom at last and, as they lined up a moment on the stones of the river bed, the prisoners looked around them.

"We kept our word, brother," said the eldest of the four. "You will remember that to our credit."

"As I did mine, sir," replied Ned. "The guns were behind you all the time, for I brought them."

"You! and there were no rednecks in the bush?" came the surprised query.

"The lieutenant and I made the whole detail," replied Ned with a smile. "The guns were—or had been—your own," he added.

"Cheated! Cheated and trapped by a boy," said the Boer, wrathfully.

"Sir," Ned returned with assumed sternness, "there has been no cheating here. A soldier of the Queen, and an American besides, speaks only the truth in war. I mentioned no numbers. The lieutenant and I were the whole detachment and your guns were the ones I referred to. After you, gentlemen. The guard will conduct you to your quarters."

The prisoners were marched off through ranks of grinning Tommies, but the lieutenant and Ned Pevear were cheered to the echo as they walked into headquarters to report.

That night, a captain of the Royal Engineers, not to be outdone by "a rookie and a boy" outwitted the Boer guards, who, because of the capture of the patrol, were stationed at the bridge, and actually removed the dynamite charges from the mine borings, where the Derbyshire lieutenant had cut the wires.

And the next day there were three heroes in camp.

Ned fairly blushed under the commendations that came to him.

"General, was I foolhardy and criminal again?" he inquired.

"Sir," said the general, "you have nobly retrieved yourself. It was a gallant deed, and I apolo-

gize for any unmerited words I have ever spoken against you. Fact is," he added, breaking away from his official and routine tone, "I take back anything I ever said about you, you young beggar; and if I ever catch you doing anything like that again, by Jupiter! I'll make a major-general of you. My lieutenant here saved the bridge; but you saved the lieutenant. Honors are even, I fancy, and you'll have to draw lots for that V. C."

And how Ned did wish that Maskin was beside him to hear the general's praise.

But Maskin was not beside him, and after the excitement of the moment had passed, the reaction came, and Ned felt once more steal upon him that old strain of homesickness that could not be warded off whenever he missed his friend.

"Of what use," he thought, "is it for me to stay here fighting these Boers, with whom I really have no quarrel when I might be risking my life for my own flag and country in some land where I am needed. I'm going home."

At once he applied to General French for permission to return to his special service in headquarters.

"I've made myself right with you, General, I hope," he said; "and I think it's wise for me to get away before I get into any more scrapes. I should like to report at headquarters, sir, if you will permit me. I should like to apply for a discharge."

"What! leave the service, lad?" cried the general. "Why is that?"

"I'm troubled about my own service, sir," the boy replied. "You see my place is really at home, and it comes over me every once in a while that I ought to be there rather than here. Not but that I've been well used by you, General. I appreciate it all and am most thankful. But I do miss my friend sadly and I would like to get away."

"Well, lad; I can't really keep you," said the general; "for, as I understand your case, you are on special service here and have never been regularly recruited. So, though I'm sorry to have you go, it must be as you say. If you were not an American I should like to recommend you for advance and decoration; but, don't you know, I can't do either; so I can only do as you wish—say good-by and thank you in the name of the service for gallant actions and ready attention to duty. On the whole, lad," he added, "I'm glad you did take that flying leap over the Boers on the kopje and are not kicking your heels in the Pretoria prison stockade. Don't remember my scolding, lad; remember only my words of praise, which I give you heartily."

So Ned left the gallant cavalry leader at the front and dropped back to headquarters at Bloemfontein; and the day after his arrival in that green city of the veldt, he presented himself at the Residency.

The "lords and gentlemen" were writing as hard as ever in the ball-room; the soldier clerks were clicking their typewriters just as ceaselessly in the dining-room when he "braced up" and applied for permission for a personal interview with Lord Roberts.

But, just as he had run up against General French and had been "switched off" on another track when he had once before determined on a similar interview with the commander-in-chief, so, now, as he waited for permission to enter, his heart gave a sudden leap as there, in British headquarters, his eyes fell upon a well-known uniform—the blue of the United States Army.

"Oh, sir!" he said to the officer; "I beg pardon, but are you not an American?"

"Yes, my lad; American attache at Lord Roberts's headquarters," the officer replied.

"And so am I an American, sir," Ned blurted out. "And I want to get home. Can't you help me out?"

"American?" queried the attache. "Then what are you doing here?"

"I am on scouting service with French's Irregulars, sir, detailed for special messenger duty, at headquarters," Ned replied. "I was aid to General Lawton in the Philippines—and I'm getting homesick."

"With General Lawton? Oh, yes, I've heard of you," the attache replied. "Lord Roberts himself, told me of you. But he gave you a good word, too, lad, and said you were a mighty bright fellow. I've heard about your affair at the bridge over the Modder. But how did you get out here, if you were General Lawton's aid? It's a good ways off—is Manila."

Then Ned, once again told the attache the story of his adventures, and how, from far-off Luzon he and Maskin had been "blown over to South Africa."

"And now he's dead, sir—killed at Driefontein," Ned concluded, "and I want to do the right thing; but I'm all broke up over the affair; I'm tired of fighting here, and I want to get away. Somehow, it don't seem right for me to fight under the Union Jack when my place is with the stars and stripes."

"You have had an experience and that's a fact," the attache replied. "But I'm hanged if I know how I can help you. Oh, yes I do—we can try at any rate. I just happened to think; our Consul at Cape Town is here in Bloemfontein this very day; indeed, lad, he's in that room, yonder, paying his respects to Lord Roberts. Just wait a bit; we'll lay for him as he comes out and get him to hear your story."

The American Consul from Cape Town heard the boy's story with interest.

"An aid to Lawton and a protege of Colonel Sinclair, eh?" he said. "Why, I know Colonel Sinclair, lad; and I'm sure I met your father once or twice in St. Louis. I think myself you've been knocked about the world quite enough for a youngster. You are especially detailed here, you say? I'll see Lord Roberts at once about you."

And with the usual American persistency and straightforwardness the American Consul cut through the red tape that would have delayed his action and secured a second and speedy interview with the commander-in-chief.

Five minutes later, Ned was summoned into Lord Roberts's presence.

"So you are tired of us, lad, and want to get home, eh?" the general said. "I thought you were in for the war."

"But my friend is dead, sir," Ned replied, "and somehow I've been thinking my place as an American is in our own service, rather than under another flag."

"Others of us have lost friends, too, my boy," Lord Roberts replied, thinking perhaps of his own gallant son, struck down in those early days of the war, in the bloody battle at Colenso; "and still we stick to our duty. But your case is different, I admit. I have the story of your wanderings in mind; I know your courage here, too, and I see that, under

your love of adventure, there lives, also, a spirit of loyalty to your own. You are not really one of the sons of the Empire, although I think we might almost call you a grandson, eh? I am glad to grant the request of your Consul and relieve you from duty, though I do it with regret. If you remain, I'll give you a place in my special scouts that your American Burnham, is organizing for me. We've got to place more reliance on those eyes of the army in this land of hill and valley. Will you consider my offer?"

Ned wavered.

"You are very kind, my lord," he replied at length. "But I really believe my duty is at home. I have never been discharged from our service, you know, and it seems to me I'm rather forgetting my Americanism. Am I not right, sir, to decide as I do?"

"I must believe you are, my lad," Lord Roberts replied. "Well, you've done the Queen good service. In her name I thank you. Be as loyal to your own government and as reliable a soldier to your own flag as you have been to ours and I have no doubt you will find that the time has not been misspent that you passed in helping to assert the supremacy and rights of England in this unnecessary, cruel, but just and righteous war. England and America depend on their sons for a glorious future; see to it my boy, that you do nothing to disgrace

your training nor deny your birthright. Good-by, lad; you are discharged from Her Majesty's service—in which I must confess I cannot rightly find that you ever really enlisted. You are now in the hands of your Consul with the thanks of the commander-in-chief for faithful and efficient service."

And the hero of Kandahar and Paardeberg, the resistless conqueror of the Vaal, relaxed discipline so far as to shake hands with the American lad in kindly and friendly farewell, and to dismiss him from his presence with a hearty "God bless you!"

So Ned Pevear was free and homeward bound. But America is a long way from South Africa and it was many days before he stood on his own home soil. Even before he left the seat of war he prevailed upon the Consul to let him pay a parting visit to his friend, the Filipino major, and he so far interested the American representative in that dusky ex-member of Aguinaldo's staff as to be able to tell the wounded man that when he had sufficiently recovered he also should be sent to his home in Luzon. For "home," wherever it may be, in whatever clime and under whatever flag, is the one direction toward which the hearts of all wanderers and exiles turn; it is the one compelling word that will draw men and women from the ends of the earth, even as it is the burden of all men's sweetest songs and the slogan under which all patriots rally to fight—be they Boers

or Britons, Filipinos or Americans; for home and mother are the dearest words of every tongue, and Maskin, after all, wanderer though he was, was loyal to this home-love—true to the core.

"We may never meet again, my brother," said the Filipino, as he stretched out a hand in farewell to the American. "But you have done me a good service. I hated you as an American invader; I love you as an American brother, and I shall go back to my own dear Luzon to work among my fellows for what I now believe to be our best and surest interest. And, now that we are about to part, let me confess one thing to you," he added. "There were other papers found by me at Malolos than those you forced from me."

"No! Is that so? What were they?" Ned inquired.

"I kept those I was most anxious to take from their place of hiding," the Filipino said. "For, besides those newspapers from America that I gave up to you, I had recovered the President Aguinaldo's secret correspondence with the Spanish generals, proposing a union of interests and of forces against you Americans—even before the hostilities about Manila began."

"Whew! you don't say so!" cried Ned. "Why, that would have changed things if we could have got hold of those papers, eh?"

"Surely," the major replied. "It would have let your people know, too,—as we, indeed, have long known, that Aguinaldo was playing a double game —not that of the patriot but rather of the wily, unreliable partisan."

"And yet you backed him up, Major," Ned observed.

"Because it seemed the right thing to do," the Filipino explained. "Victory and revenge and Filipino success were what I wished to see; and for them as for him I fought blindly. Now, thanks to you and our friend who is dead, I have learned to see things aright. I go back, if go I may, to show my countrymen that their own best interests lie beneath the protection of the flag which Dewey brought to our shores, the flag for which Lawton died, the flag which means, in time, to all my brethren of the Philippines, advancement, justice and freedom. We do not all see this yet. It may be years, before we see things aright, but I know that we shall see them. As for me, Senor Neddie, I shall ever feel that the dearest memory of my life is that moment when my foes became my friends and when one of them even died for me out of love for his own friend. *Adios!*"

Good-by it was at last. Good-by to South Africa, land of warring interests, brave foemen and gallant deeds in war, the stage upon which was fought

out the tragedy of the onward march of civilization and progress — that march in which the English-speaking race are ever in the van.

It was good-by to the Tommies, browned by African sun; good-by to colonials, brave in their imperial loyalty; good-by to Boers, valiant but mistaken because a bar in the way of the world's advance; good-by to consul, to Cape Town and all the excitements and panoply of war; good-by to Africa —the Dark Continent fast coming into the light.

And, at last, it was hail to home! To loving hearts that long had mourned the missing son as lost or dead; to welcoming hands that shook in tremulous but hearty greeting; to duty, that came, as all duties must come, hard at first and not always agreeable to one who has so long been a wanderer and his own master. And, with letters to the War Department he was duly discharged from a service in which he had, really, never enlisted!

But Ned was glad to be at home, in spite of duty and the old life he took up. Of course he was a hero to the boys of Tolman's. For he went back there to finish his interrupted studies. The boys hailed him witht applause and envy; for had he not fought with Lawton and Roberts? Was he not an oracle about Tommies and colonials and Canadians and Boers; about Ladysmith and Mafeking and all the veldts and kopjes of the Vaal? More than that,

however, he was the school hero because he had kept his word, hasty though it was; he had not taken a "dare." But things looked differently to him, after his experiences and disciplines, and when at last, he reported for duty to the principal, he begged pardon for having been a fool.

"I don't know about that, Ned," said Mr. Tolman. "Even foolishness, if it works out the problem of duty aright, has its use in the world. And, whatever else may be said of your surprising and questionable escapade, it has, at least, taught you the simplicity of heroism, the worth of valor, the strength of loyalty and the demands of duty. And it has done so, I think, as nothing else, perhaps, could teach a restless young gentleman stowaway who, circling the world for adventure, comes gladly back to his own again, having learned the value of a friend like Maskin, the true nobility of gentlemen soldiers like Lawton and Roberts and the real grandeur of that loyal service which, even while fighting under two flags, never permitted you to disgrace either but to remain always honest, manly, open hearted and true to yourself."

And Ned could only say, aloud, "Thank you, sir!" and, in his heart, "Amen!"

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